NME ICONS
SPECIAL COLLECTORS MAGAZINE

MUSE

£4.99 LIMITED-EDITION PUBLICATION

100-PAGE MUSE SPECIAL

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE UK'S BIGGEST ROCK BAND

- Q&As WITH MATT, DOM AND CHRIS
- ALL THE ALBUMS AND GREATEST GIGS REVISITED
- STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS
- MATT'S CONSPIRACY THEORIES INVESTIGATED

10 YEARS OF CLASSIC INTERVIEWS + UNSEEN PHOTOS

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WELCOME

Prepare yourself for lift off...

At first glance - back in the straightforward, unchallenging, meat-and-potatoes, cigarettes-and-alcohol, chuck-us-over-that-there-stool-our-lad-I'm-coming-over-all-acoustic Dadrock days of 1998 when Oasis and The Verve ruled the airwaves - Muse emerged as a baffling proposition. They looked like yer average indie band, they talked like yer average indie band and, after a hefty bout of frenzied space rock, they sure as hell *smelt* like yer average indie band. But the second they started playing they were something else entirely – willowy Arabian guitar lines weaved around chunks of meaty metallica, falsettos leapt out of galactic prog episodes, the lyrics spoke of randy cavemen, muscle museums and android ladyfriends. They really were from an entirely different musical dimension, way bigger than our puny minds could comprehend. Even when Muse were a small band, they were already supermassive.

No wonder it took us all a while to get our heads around them, and Muse weren't going to wait around for us to catch up. As word of their genius spread they were already composing operatic opuses and staging gigs full of geometrical delights on 'Origin Of Symmetry'. By the time everyone realised they were on course to be one of the biggest bands in the world they were already plotting trajectories to entirely different galaxies with 'Absolution'. And since then they've grown bigger than we could ever have imagined, but as big as they were always supposed to be: Number Three in America with 'The Resistance', filling Wembley with sold-out crowds, collecting Best Live and Best Band awards across the globe and now playing to millions of fans worldwide from their own personal tower blocks and headlining Glastonbury 2010.

Muse are the first 21st Century stadium band, an inspiration to an entire generation of bands that you can actually get as big as you think. So in their honour we've trawled the NME archives to compile their greatest interviews and weirdest quotes, their hottest shots and greatest triumphs in one place. In addition we've put Matt Bellamy's lyrics and wildest conspiracy theories under the microscope and polled the world of rock for their views on Muse's inexorable rise.

Revelations? We got 'em all, right here...

MBx

Mark Beaumont
Editor/Muse obsessive/author
(pictured here with his book *'Out Of This World: The Story Of Muse'* which is available right now from Amazon

COVER: MARTIN PHILBY/GETTY, ED MILES THIS PAGE: ED MILES

AKLEY, D TONGE, HAMISH BROWN, ED MILES

21ST CENTURY SUPERSTARS

With the help of some famous fans, let's look at how three Devon boys became the band of a generation

TEXT: MARK BEAUMONT

"What do I think of Muse?" Mat Horne shivers at the sound of their name. "I saw them at V Festival a few years ago and I couldn't watch the whole gig because it was so intense. It was too grand and vast, it was huge. They're one of the biggest rock bands in the world - it's quite impressive to make that sort of noise with three people."

So what is the significance of Muse to modern music? Well it's easy to argue the case for them having rejuvenated and reinvented stadium rock for the 21st Century. You could also claim they've wrestled the much-maligned concept of 'prog' from the spliff-weakened clutches of the '70s beard brigade and made it a contemporary, futuristic and visceral art form accessible to modern youth in the way that Yes wibbling on about Arthurian legends for fifty-seven days at a time most certainly isn't. There's even a right old punk vs prog barney to be had by suggesting that perhaps prog had the right idea about music being best on a grand and complex scale but made the mistake of becoming too drawn-out, self-indulgent and smelling of curry-matted wizard beards and so had to be put out of our misery by punk. Hence Muse have saved/resurrected ambitious suites of music into single-track chunks to be easily gulped down the apathetic gullets of Generation Why?

THEY PLAY AS IF THEY'RE FIVE STEPS FURTHER UP THE GIG LADDER THAN THEY ARE

"They're able to bring prog back into pop," says Ash's Tim Wheeler. "There's not many able to merge prog and pop and Rage Against The Machine riffs and make it all cool. It's an incredible feat."

You could argue all of this in Muse's favour, and much much more – and over the next few pages we'll do exactly that. But perhaps Matt Horne has encapsulated Muse's greatest impact in that one awestruck, eyeball-imploded, running-screaming-from-the-field-with-bleeding-tear-ducts quote. Muse made rock BIG. Bigger than Jagger's wiggle, bigger than Bono's lemon, bigger – you could even argue – than Floyd's blow-up pig. From the earliest gigs Muse have always played as if they're five steps further up the gig ladder than they actually were – they'd squeeze an arena stage show into theatres, a stadium-sized set into the arenas and a whole Knebworth's worth of rock'n'roll kazam into Wembley Stadium. So they inevitably grew too big for any Earthly venue to contain, too big for the Maccabees fan to take in in one sitting. And big enough to make the average electro-rock legend despair for their own career.

"It reminds me a bit of Queen," says Peter Hook. "But I really like their new record. I actually play some Muse now when I DJ, which is a real first for me. 'Uprising' is a great track.

HALKLEY

band. Here's me banging out a couple of tunes in a little lock-up in Manchester and there's them talking over the world. Something went wrong somewhere, didn't it?!"

What's most inspirational about Muse's confident and steady rise to the stadiums is that they did it utterly without compromise. Despite their debut album 'Showbiz' being roundly mocked for its progressive tendencies, bizarre theorems and wild vocal and guitar extravagances (and, as you'll read later in this magazine, innumerable Radiohead comparisons, not least from this writer), they went away bloodied and bruised but came back with 'Origin Of Symmetry', a record even more over-blown, histrionic, full of edges-of-known-science concepts about multi-dimensions and the fundamental fabric of the universe and prone to sounding like it's being sung by an operatic harpie with its testicles caught in an industrial mincer. And it went platinum. At a time when the zeitgeist was all Williamsburg pretty boys in leather and tight jeans playing angular, no-fi garage pop songs with muffled vocals about coppers being rubbish.

Muse have consistently swum against the tide, refusing to alter their vision, style or music to court a solitary shred of hype. This was a band who achieved massive success despite shunning every bandwagon that rattled by full of Arctic monkey-a-likes. As such they stand today as icons of undiverting purpose and non-compromise – in an industry where bands are constantly being moulded to fit demographic appeals and emerging genres, Muse are an inspiration to new bands in the art of forging your own furrow.

They're also a masterful example of inclusiveness. Many A-list bands thrive on their unobtainable enigma, the distance between artist and fan. These are generally bands who know they'll always fail to live up to their audience's expectations of them. Not Muse – from the earliest days they've been as accessible as humanly possible, posting regularly on their websites, installing in-studio webcams and inviting fans to their masked on-the-road parties.

And even when they got so big globally they couldn't please all the people, they concocted world-wide internet treasure hunts to involve their fans across the globe, from Tokyo to Moscow to Hong Kong and beyond. At every stage of their rise Muse have invented innovative methods of involving their fans, creating a huge fanbase who all feel part of an elite club, contributing to exhaustive wikipedia-style

Supermassive rock and roll heroes: (below) in Lisbon June 2004, and (right) doing what they do best

staying in tune with their more techno-savvy young fans. In an era when accessibility is paramount to the new music consumer, Muse represent the prime model of how you build a band that a spoilt and demanding web generation of hyper-music fans can become obsessed by.

Of course, it helps that they rock like a far less annoying Eyjafjallajökull. Whether thrashing and flailing around a tiny US club gig overtaken by the red mist or accompanied by ballerinas hanging from giant inflatable globes, laser-beaming satellite dishes and screens so big they give a reasonable view of the gig from Cydonia, Muse give 1001 per cent at every show, setting a new standard of onstage explosiveness that Egyptian Hip-Hop will struggle to match.

MATT BELLAMY IS ONE OF THE BOLDEST, BRAVEST AND MOST FEARLESS LYRICISTS EVER

"They're astonishing live," says Tim Wheeler. "There's something special about them. It'd be hard for a band to follow in their footsteps. They've definitely thrown down the gauntlet for bands, live. Maybe

And having something to say, for that matter. What's often lost under Muse's synapse-obliterating visuals and iron-clad riffage is the fact that Matt Bellamy is one of the boldest, bravest, angriest and most fearless lyricists of our generation. He explores themes and ideas drawn from the very fringes of accepted thinking, sometimes absurd, sometimes visionary. He addresses the possibilities of alien DNA infecting Earth to create mankind, the amount of power that the businessmen and politicians of unelected organisations such as the Bilderberg Group exert over us or the underhand media manipulation our leaders

alien attack (but aimed at more Earthly enemies, as posited in 'Exopolitics'). He scratches at the impenetrable varnish cocooning the news we're allowed to see and squints at what might be underneath.

It's easy to dismiss or discredit Matt's ideas by lumping them in with the more Icke-ish conspiracy theories of the royal lizard dynasty and so forth, but what Matt constantly strives to do is thrust forth an alternative viewpoint on politics and humanity, to make his listeners question the information they're being spoon fed daily and to research and reason out their own form of The Truth. And considering merely advocating peace and bagism in the 60s and *Oprah* for fear of not getting a US visa – it's clear just how daring a stand he's making.

With so many major acts too apathetic or scared of alienating the mainstream by expressing any opinions in their music or interviews, political or otherwise, it's to Muse that the open-minded and inquisitive rock fan has turned for enlightenment, ideological provocation and empathy. In an age when those in control condescend to and mock us for our powerlessness, Matt Bellamy humanises the frustration, paranoia and anger of the ordinary man who refuses to be a pawn in a global game with no rules. Muse are voicing our concerns, as brightly and loudly as they humanly can.

Of course, Muse's significance largely depends on how deeply you buy into this counter-information conceit. Immerse yourself in Muse's world and they have an impact far beyond music – they're pioneers of a whole new way of thinking about the world, communicating ideas and acting on them. They could turn out to be a rock'n'roll *Fight Club*, instigating not just debate but all-out revolt. They could literally change the world, for everyone. Or you could just see them as a kick-ass rock band with brilliant lights and ace balloons and songs about Martians, whatever. One

OOKER, GETTY

In beds paid for by Madonna: Dom, Chris and Matt in the good ol' days

THE FIRST INTERVIEW

IN THE BEGINNING

REPRINTED FROM NME FEBRUARY 22 1999

Slowly, Muse are creeping into public conscience, Radiohead comparison by Radiohead comparison...

If it was the plot of a new Robin Williams movie you'd be puking in your nachos. There's these three Disney-sweet, doe-eyed Devon kids and their school band. Five years they slog and scrape painting and decorating by day, regurgitating old fraggle covers in cold local pub backrooms by night until, one day, their fairy godfestival appears in the shape of In The City '98, plucks them from obscurity and announces them its glorious champions.

And you'll love the twist. See, then they got a record deal from Madonna for Christmas.

"We were in LA doing a showcase for another record company," Matt Bellamy remembers, "and Maverick heard we were around and asked us to stay a few more days to play for them. We signed the day before Christmas Eve. We got a deal for Christmas."

Don't you feel sick to the stomach knowing you're labelmates with Alanis Morissette?

Matthew grins. "Not really. They've got Deftones and I really love Deftones. The great thing about Maverick is that they've only got about 15 acts and they've taken us as a priority. They're not the sort of label who'd drop a band if their first album doesn't sell too well. But we're not corporate at all. We're still independent in this country."

Contrary bleeders, Muse. They write songs of great depth and import, yet refuse to give even the slightest hint as to their meaning because according to Matthew "I let everyone look at them how they want to." They play serrated guitar epics, yet onstage they behave like demented gnats on top-grade drugs. They've signed to Madso's mega-label in America, yet may still sign to Ruptured Tampon records worldwide. And they're an allegedly 'corporate' band who refused to play the winners showcase at In The City because it was too, um, corporate.

"We didn't wanna overdo it," says Matthew. "And the live thing was a bit of a shambles."

Not so their debut single 'Muscle Museum': the primal howl of a throat lined with razor blades and a soul sunken from playing every toilet venue in the Honiton district, a mighty noise which could have been cloned from DNA scraped from Thom Yorke's own larynx. Oh, except Muse consider such squalid comparisons to be "lazy journalism".

"It's too easy to say, 'You sound like this, you sound like that," says Chris. "People don't listen to the stuff enough to make up their own mind about it."

But you do sound like Radiohead, though.

"We don't want to get pigeonholed so easily."

Oh come on. If there was a National Sounding Like Radiohead Championship you'd be on the expert judging panel alongside Radiohead and another band who sound exactly like Radiohead.

"We take our influences from a lot of American bands, like Nirvana," Matthew asserts. "And, yeah, Radiohead at the time of 'The Bends' were doing new things with guitar music that it's hard not to be influenced by. If that's your opinion, then fair enough. I just don't care."

Muse, then. Sound like Radiohead. Only better. ***Mark Beaumont***

THE EARLY SINGLE

MUSE
MUSCLE MUSEUM EP
MUSHROOM

REPRINTED FROM NME NOVEMBER 27 1999

Co-owned by Rupert Murdoch and Madonna (in Britain and America respectively), Muse's ongoing mission to sound like a genetically-engineered hybrid of Queen, Jeff Buckley and Radiohead continues apace, though with label bosses like those two, who's to say this Exmouth trio won't become the biggest band in the world? Still with the recent return of The Scorpions and with Radiohead's new album

THE DETAILS

MUSCLE MUSEUM EP
Released: Jan 11
Recorded: Sawmills, Cornwall
Producer: Paul Reeve
Artwork: Steve Conner,

ANDY WILLSHER

THE EARLY GIG

REPRINTED FROM NME JULY 10 1999

EXETER CAVERN CLUB
JUNE 23, 1999

The first sighting takes place in a dank basement near their hometown

Not quite as famous as Glastonbury, just 40 minutes up the road, this year's Exeter Festival is nevertheless rocking to the red-raw sexual voodoo sounds of Roger Daltrey, Toyah Wilcox and The Yardbirds. Pass the smelling salts, Ada. But in a crammed cellar beneath the cobbled sidewalks of this quaint little heritage town, something altogether more savage and ungovernable is screaming itself into life.

They are Muse and they are going to be huge.

Muse are on home turf in Exeter, so the reception for their opening brace of Nirvana-ish squalls is hysterical. On this evidence you might have had them pegged as mere local heroes, a classic Small Body Big Head threesome with singer-songwriter Matt Bellamy's tubular Tom Cruise looks an added bonus.

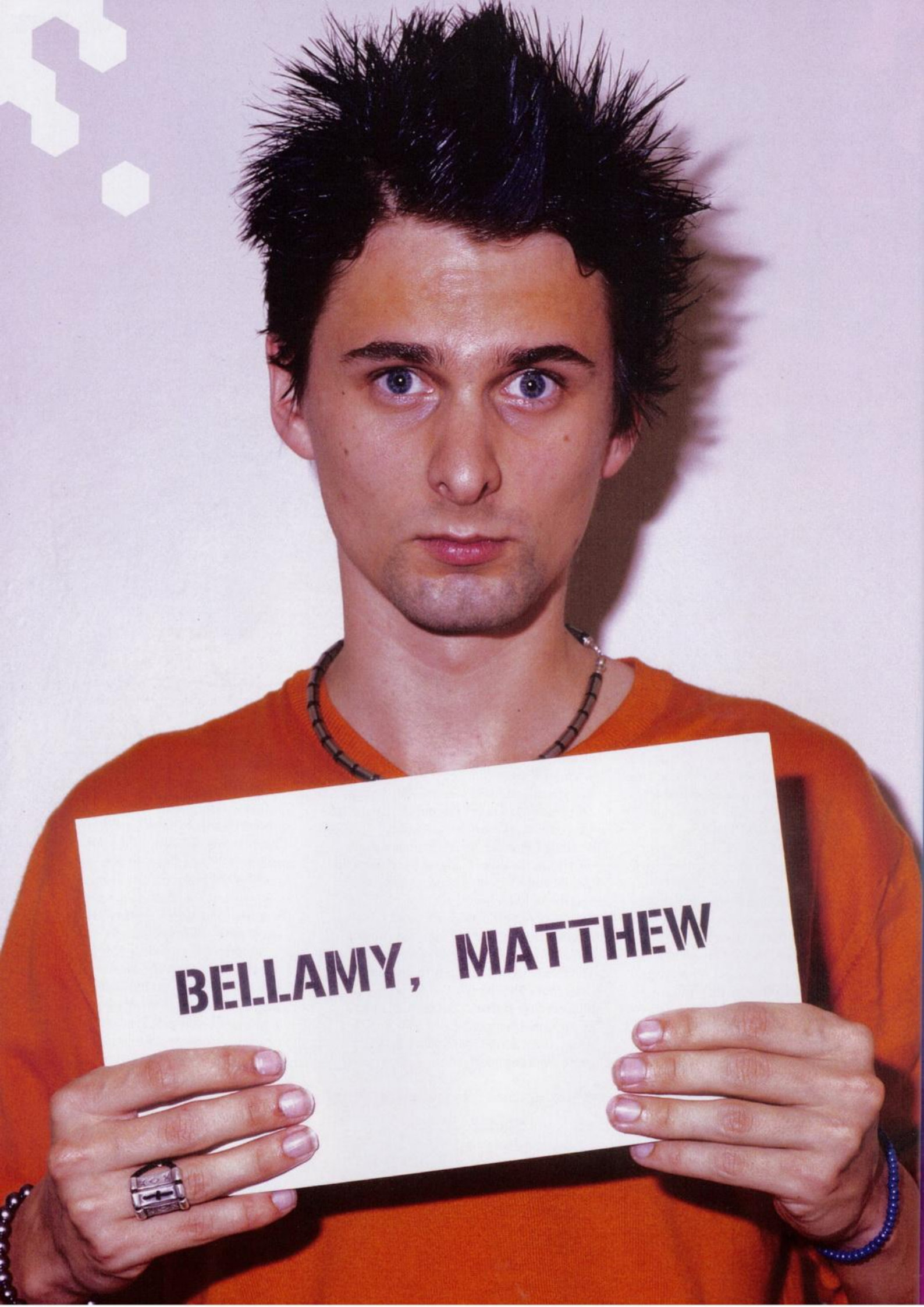
But then comes current single 'Uno', a feverish torrent of torrid punk-flamenco flourishes wrapped in a barbed-wire lyric of quite unreasonable vitriol. This is the hard stuff alright, but backboned with a majestically unlikely Latino rhythm which only serves to pressure-cook its molten emotional core still.

Such stylistic quirks are a Muse forte.

'Cave' starts off as pulverising prog-punk but billows out into full-blown rock opera. 'Showbiz' rides a particular thrash melody even as Bellamy scales several octaves of strangulated bile. But the centrepiece is the trio's imminent US debut single 'Muscle Museum', a mash up of twisted reggae beats, Eastern European string sounds, a volcanically juddering chorus and a boiling geyser of wracked confessional lyrics. Crikey.

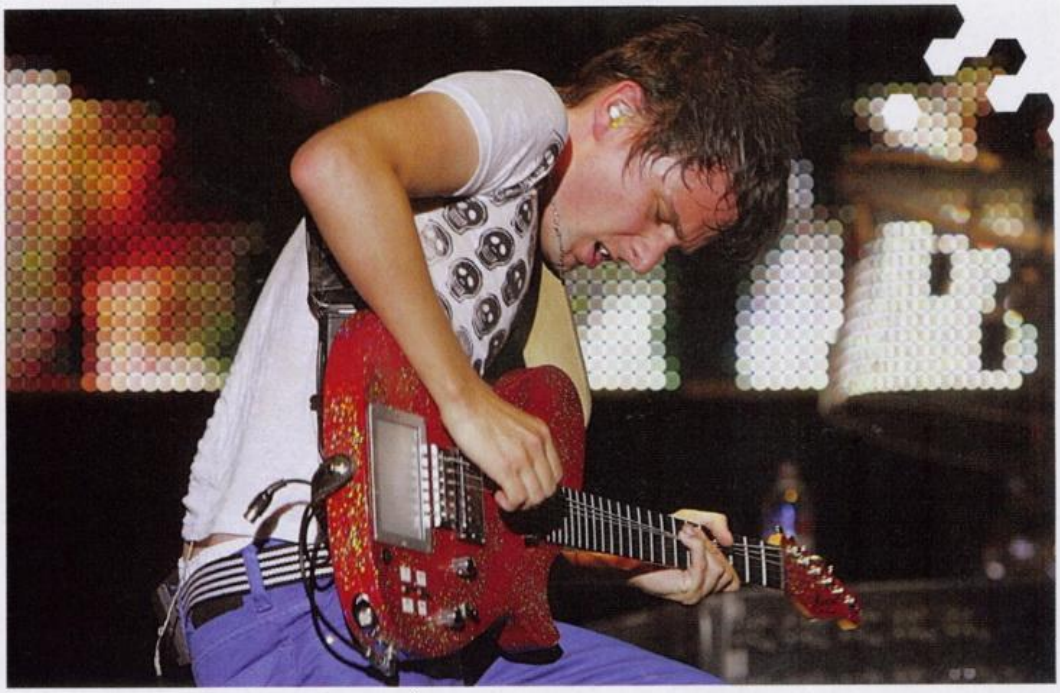
There's more, of course, all buckling rhythms and crackling power chords and soul dredging falsetto howls whose titles will one day share space with Nirvana in the national pop psyche.

At least, that's how Muse's future looks from here. There's too much seething passion here to keep battened down for long, too many fully-formed angst anthems primed to explode. Muse are the sort of band that both mainstream rock fans and tormented romantics will obsess over: ballroom-dancing punk poets with fire in


BELLAMY, MATTHEW

MEET Matt Bellamy

He's the conspiracy-theorising mastermind behind the 21st Century's greatest live band who, er, used to steal cars and fancy his babysitter



What song describes you best?
"'Blue Valentine' by Tom Walts."

What is heaven?
"A Christian ideal of the mind without body."

What is hell?
"I have recurring nightmares about being in a Nazi concentration camp with all my family and constantly being sent to solitary confinement."

What is your earliest memory?
"I remember spinning around loads of times with a bucket and spade in my hand and letting go of it and smashing a big mirror. My mum said I'd cursed the family for seven years!"

What's the worst trouble you've been in?
"I once got in with a dodgy group of friends and we'd steal shit cars and sell them. We got this Escort from a scrap yard run by the hardest guy in town and he found out that we'd sold it to someone for a few hundred quid. He came round to my house and said that he'd burn down my house when my family were in it if I didn't give him £500. So I had to give the bloke the tour bus we had at the time."

Who was the first love of your life?
"My babysitter. She saved my life when I was choking once and after that I loved her."

What's the best piece of advice you've received?
"I used a Ouija board and I asked if there was life after death. Some spirit replied, 'He who seeketh knowledge seeketh sorrow'!"

If you we're invisible for a day, what would you do?
"I'd break into Buckingham Palace and torture the lot of them."

How would you most like to die?
"If I had a choice of a way to go it would be drowning. I've heard it's quite relaxing. Apparently there's a few seconds of panic when your lungs fill with water but once it's in there you just chill out. You can sit on the – just floating around, it sounds a little bit trippy. I've done a bit of scuba diving so I quite like hanging around the sea with fish."

Which are best, the small gigs or the stadiums?
"We've got a few songs that can only be played in front of a minimum of 10,000 people. They just fall apart in a small room. I don't mind that the venues we're playing are getting bigger. From our point of view on stage, the difference between 5,000 and 20,000 is not that big, it becomes a blur after the first 5000 people. Other bands struggle though: I remember hearing about Nirvana losing something by playing those venues."

Do you consider yourself a celebrity?
"There are bands whose conception of 'making it' circulates entirely around all the stuff outside the music. I do occasionally meet these people. I'm not naming names, but you do think they live in such a different world to us, even though some of them are on the same kind of level as us. Muse don't really have that, we're just not big consumers of that *Hello!* world. I don't feel like a celebrity. I think we're the complete you're famous for your face or television presence or being on magazine covers – but not because of any talent. For us it's the other way round. We're only known for the music, so people don't try to chase us around speculating on our private lives. When you meet people you should judge them on who they are not what the media tells you to think about them."

"I DON'T FEEL LIKE A CELEBRITY. MUSE ARE KNOWN FOR THE MUSIC ONLY"

What was your dad's greatest musical moment?
"My dad's band recorded Margaret Thatcher's favourite ever tune and gigged with Rolf Harris. He was in a band called The Tornados and the song was called 'Telstar'. It was way before I was born, so it was really interesting hearing about him doing gigs with Rolf Harris and The Beatles and all the stories. It was weird back then because it was a different kind of touring world – you couldn't play around the world like you can now – so his experiences were a lot smaller. He even did a season at Butlins."

What are your final wishes?
"That gravity in the world was lighter so spiders would die. That I could be happy in solitary confinement. And that artists

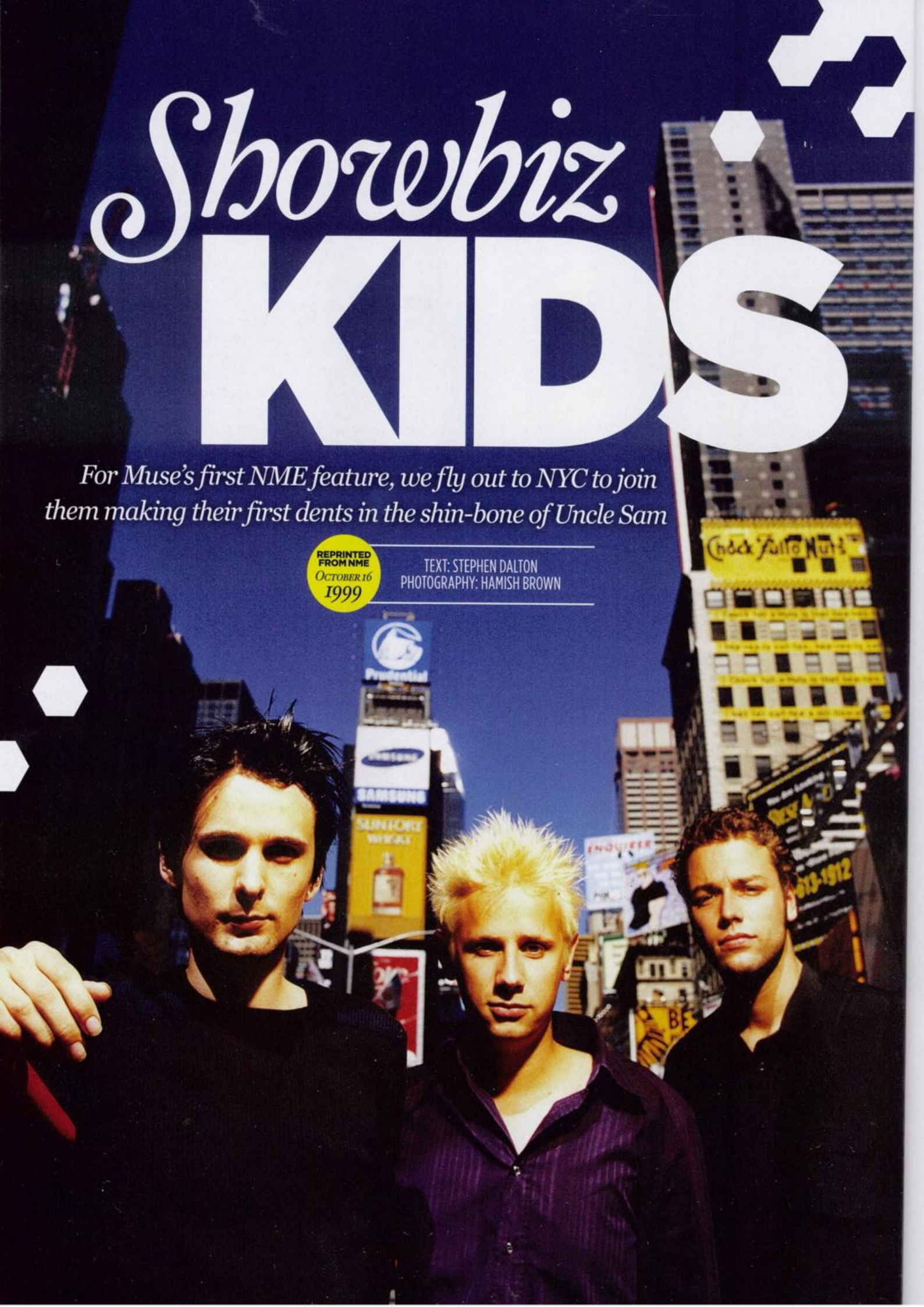
TT-HUNTER/GETTY

Showbiz KIDS

For Muse's first NME feature, we fly out to NYC to join them making their first dents in the shin-bone of Uncle Sam

REPRINTED FROM NME
OCTOBER 16
1999

TEXT: STEPHEN DALTON
PHOTOGRAPHY: HAMISH BROWN



This just looks silly. Three 21-year-olds from the sleepy fringes of Devon, lording it up in a glitzy Manhattan Hotel lounge, chomping gleefully on tree-trunk cigars like they've just shagged New York senseless and eaten the music business for dessert. Any minute now these straggly indie kid interlopers are sure to be turfed out onto the sidewalk with all the other guitar-toting losers, back to their Transit van world. See ya. Keep dreaming, suckers.

Except this never happens. Because, even if they remain just above toilet-gig level at home, Muse are trainee rock royalty in America right now. Madonna herself beat half-a-dozen bidders to sign the youngsters to her Maverick label last November. Which is why the Teignmouth trio are billeted in New York for three weeks of back-to-back promotion for an album that hasn't even been released yet.

"TEIGNMOUTH IS SORT OF LIKE TORQUAY WITHOUT THE NIGHTCLUBS"
DOMINIC HOWARD

When British record companies sniffed around Muse, they declared them 'the new Radiohead' and shuffled away. When American labels saw them at New York's CMJ in November, they declared them 'THE NEW RADIOHEAD!!!' and formed a queue to sign their asses on the spot. Cultural differences or Brit snobbery? Probably a bit of both, as Muse are more than the new Radiohead – they're the new Pixies, Nirvana, Mansun, Queen and Guns N' Roses too. And, in their own broody, intense way, they are about to explode.

Matthew Bellamy (singer/guitarist). Chris Wolstenholme (bass) and Dominic Howard (drums) were thrown together into a dark place of stagnation, and decay, despair and degradation. It's called Teignmouth. Just below Torquay on the English Riviera. Teignmouth is a black-hearted realm of eternal torment from which few souls emerge unscathed. Beneath its sleepy surface of genteel retirement homes and crazy-golf ranges, something deeply wicked festers in the remorseless south Devon sun. Possibly.

"It's sort of like Torquay without the nightclubs," shudders Dom. Sounds pretty sinister. Like one of those elegantly shabby red-brick English towns where it's forever 1952 apart from the raging crack problem...

"I think the best way to describe Teignmouth would be if we sent you the article that was printed on the front page of the local paper," sneers Matthew. "There's a picture of the mayor of Teignmouth

What Was Happening

- Ladbroke Road rail crash kills 31;
- Flaming Lips' 'The Soft Bulletin' released
- Christina Aguilera's 'Genie In A Bottle'

interview that Teignmouth is a boring place, full of drug-takers. He said, "I don't know who these drug takers are, no-one takes drugs here... That gives you an idea of what it's like."

Naturally, growing up in a stifling backwater run by clock-hating killjoys straight out of footloose, the Muse boys were sometimes suicidally bored. They even resorted to doing 'dodgy stuff' on occasion.

"There was a whole lot of nights where there was nothing to do and the only stuff that was fun to do was music, " recalls Matthew. "You ended up doing dodgy stuff like breaking into swimming pools, just because that was something to do. Most of the friends we had have either gone to university or have become drug dealers."

Oooh the mayor will love that. Picture a bonfire of NMEs outside the town hall. But at least the nascent Muse had something to kick against. And kick they did, starting with their debut sixth-form gig five years ago.

"The first gig we ever played together was a Battle Of The Bands contest," says Matthew. "We wore loads of make up, played loads of trashy punk stuff and got the crowd to invade the stage and smash all our gear. And we won! That's the weird thing. Because we beat all these bands that were technically proficient, bands that sounded like Jamiroquai. People were shouting 'YOU FUCKING C – S!!' That totally affected our view of what music's about – it's not necessarily about music, it's about really believing in what you're doing."

So Muse kept plugging away, ignoring their critics, trashing their gear, dreaming of the big league. They eventually signed with a West Country management company and won a UK record deal with Mushroom, home of Garbage. And now, five years later, Madonna owns their souls. Sweet revenge on snobby old Britain and tight-arsed little Teignmouth, right?

"That's what started us, but I don't think that's what we're doing now," says Matthew. "The stuff we write now is more of a realisation of the world's like. It's easy to blame stuff on a small town but then you go out there and realise that some of the attitudes that you thought were just in your small town are actually all over."

Muse's debut album is called 'Showbiz'. Oh yes. Most first albums contain two or three half-great peaks padded out with juvenile filler. 'Showbiz' has a dozen tracks, ALL of which are heart-wrenching Wagnerian uber-anthems with fiery Spanish rhythms, seismic meta-depths of Matthew Bellamy's charred-black heart. In other words, it's fucking great.

But, bloody hell, is it miserable. Not trouser-fumbling hey-nonny-no Belle & Sebastian wistful nor chest-thumping Daddy-never-loved-me Pearl Jam feel-my-pain self-pitying. Not even beautifully desolate and fragile like Thom Yorke, but post-apocalyptic heart-on-skewer Nick Cave tormented and self-lacerating edge-of-darkness Ian Curtis fuck-up desperate. Heroically, bracingly, cathartically tragic. Hooray! And yet Matthew seems like a pleasant, well-balanced chap in person. Why the long face, Sadboy Slim?

"Erm... is this the time or the place?" Matthew wonders nervously, "I don't think it is. Aren't we all tormented in some way? I've always had trouble... I think it's like existentialism or something. The problems I'm having, if everyone else is having them, then the world's a scary place."

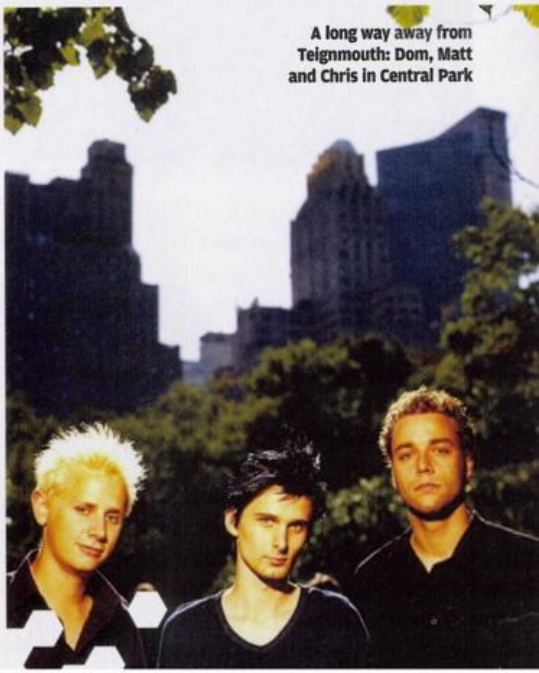
Is miserable music some kind of perverse comfort in a cruel world?

"All I can say is some of the music I listened to when I was young was like how we sound," shrugs Matthew, "That emotional, deep stuff was what made me feel good because someone else out there is saying things the same as me."

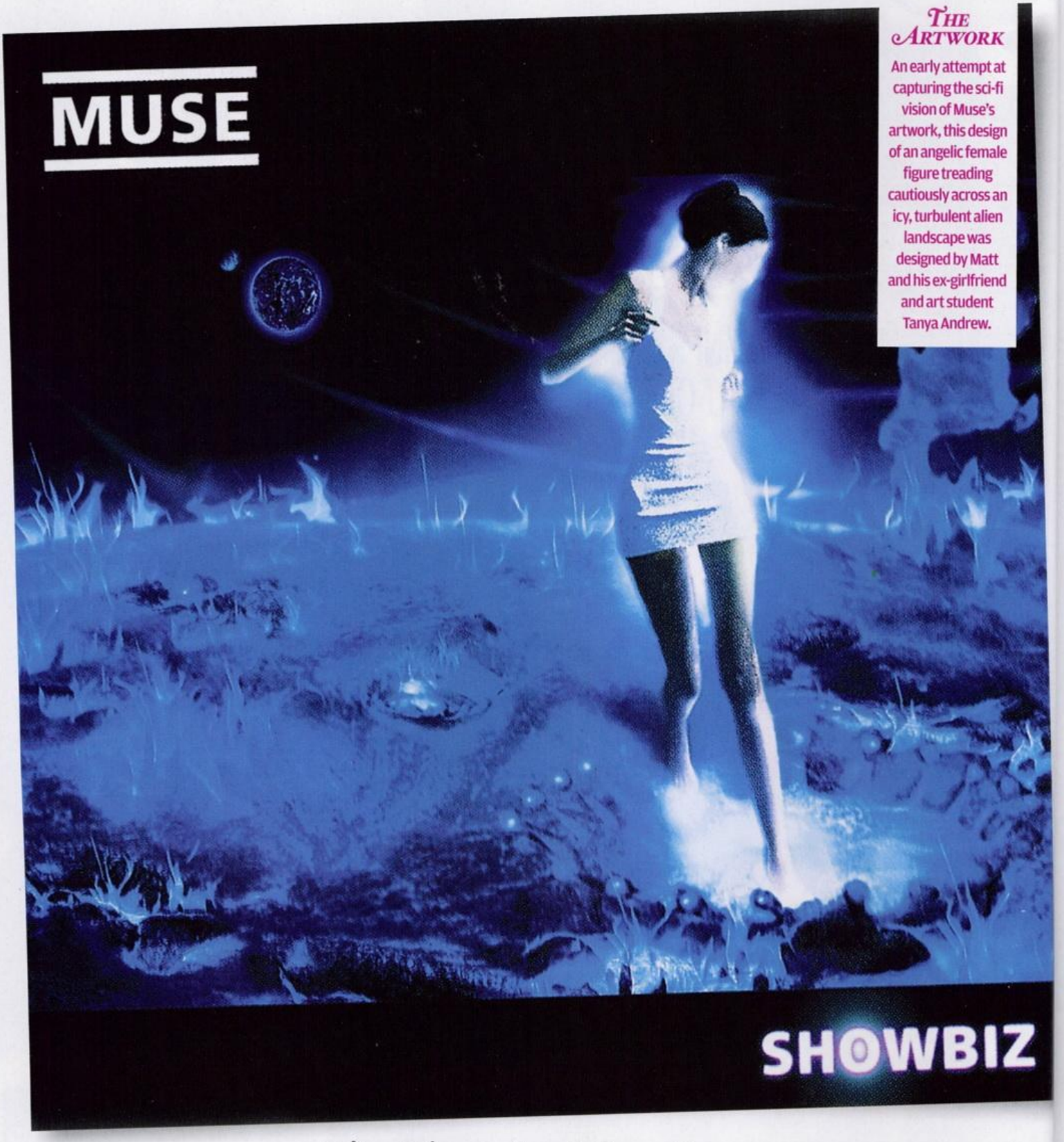
Of course, Muse will be roundly mocked for taking themselves so seriously. But cynics said the same thing about Nirvana at the end of the '80s. Remember, these boys are only 21, hurtling into a new millennium with their emotional wounds wide open.

"I think things pick up generally towards the start of every decade," nods Matthew, spotting light at the end of a very long, very dark tunnel. "In 2000 or 2001, people will start getting more positive. There's a lot of fear hanging around which people are trying to deny, but there is. And when that's over hopefully there will be a positive thing. Either that or extremely negative, hahaha! And it will ALL be over..."

The first great 21st Century guitar band has arrived. Enjoy them while there's still time.



A long way away from Teignmouth: Dom, Matt and Chris in Central Park



The Artwork

An early attempt at capturing the sci-fi vision of Muse's artwork, this design of an angelic female figure treading cautiously across an icy, turbulent alien landscape was designed by Matt and his ex-girlfriend and art student Tanya Andrew.

The Tentative First Step

SHOWBIZ

The initial glimpse the world gets of the band who would go on to change

MANDEL

Even back then, it was obvious the title was a joke. If the girl on the cover, skipping awkwardly in an unsuitable short skirt and heels across the surface of the moon didn't hammer it home enough, the three men who formed the nascent Muse, with their gothy pretentions and pre-millennial angst, clearly had loftier concerns than what Jennifer Lopez was up to. It was just that they didn't especially understand the joke they were making, and hadn't bothered writing a punchline. Muse's genius riffs across many subjects, but celebrity culture is not one of them.

Here is the whole thing with Muse's first album. It's an apprenticeship, the work of a soon-to-be special band hidden in plain sight. It sees the three of them testing their powers, working out the men they would become. It would be insane if this wasn't the case, since the band were barely out of their teens at the time. 'Showbiz' made no bigger splash than it needed to - it feels like a two-parter of Smallville rather than the big screen Superman majesty to come. The rolling pianos of 'Sunburn' and eerie chamber-of-horrors twang of 'Muscle Museum' had all the constituent ingredients for the vaudeville-metal that they would nail on 'New Born' just two years later. This was to be the legacy of 'Showbiz'.

Them being from England's deepest, sleepiest south, and this being 1999, the trio found themselves doubly isolated. These were awkward times to be young and planning to rock. With Britpop burning, the best of that period were growing fat, or cynical, or both.

Grunge, where Muse may have fitted, was an even farther memory. And pre-Strokes, there was such paucity of anything to grow excited about that people were declaring Badly Drawn Boy to be The Future with a straight face. And the last rock record anyone had got truly excited about had been 'OK Computer'.

It's well-documented how exasperated the band would get with the Radiohead comparison. But nobody can listen to 'Showbiz' and not notice the thick felt-tip line of influence – and not just because it was produced by John Leckie.

Lyrically 'Showbiz' was full of standard relationship stress (albeit expressed in more dramatic language than your regular West Country rockers), while musically it was festooned with guitars that went chugga-chugga then went off in sweeps and washes, as on 'Fillip'. Matt's vocals, for the most part were groany-moany Thom Yorke, to the point where, when he diverted it, it sounded radical, even wrong: on the languid 'Falling Down' Matt switches from the most unpleasant, ill-advised Cobain-aping screech to his most gorgeous falsetto in a literal heartbeat.

None of this is to deny the gleams of greatness amid this prototype. 'Sunburn' opened the album with a grace that betrayed the rest of it. 'Uno' was shot through with spring-loaded tension. The dense 'Cave' is a clear pre-cursor to the pop euphoria they would perfect on 'Hysteria' two albums along. There is one moment of unadulterated brilliance in 'Unintended', a gorgeous ballad that must have sounded beyond preposterous given the temperature of the time. Now, it's the slowie that Muse may have matched, but certainly never bettered.

It feels almost quaint now to think that a band were ever allowed room to make mistakes on a big-deal debut. Yet 'Showbiz' now sits as a prologue, a tempestuous debut thrown a little off-orbit in the rest of the chronology. Undervalued in its day, eclipsed to the point of near-irrelevance by what came next, it's nonetheless a lovely little curio, floating halfway between the sixth-form and the stratosphere. ***Dan Martin***

The Details

1. Sunburn ★★★★★
2. Muscle Museum ★★★★★
3. Fillip ★★★
4. Falling Down ★★
5. Cave ★★★★
6. Showbiz ★★★
7. Unintended ★★★★★
8. Uno ★★★★
9. Sober ★★
10. Escape ★★
11. Overdue ★★
12. Hate This And I'll Love You ★★

Released: October 4, 1999
Recorded: RAK Studios, London; Sawmills, Cornwall
Producer: John Leckie, Paul Reeve, Muse
Chart Position: 29
Singles: Uno, Cave, Muscle Museum, Sunburn, Unintended

ORIGINAL REVIEW: NME, 2 OCT '99

In Devon, the truth is that no-one can hear you scream. Muse's story is the familiar tale of late-teen provincial hell and, hailing from the dead-end resort of Teignmouth, it's little wonder they've taken to themselves as champions of black-clad outsider chic. Apathy is not an option, whereas hanging around the common room looking a bit mysterious is.

Their debut LP is a deadly serious affair, then, and somewhat inevitability draws comparisons to Radiohead. John Leckie ('The Bends') produces, serrated, gigantic guitars rule and happiness is quickly only suitable for emotional retards.

The problem though, after setting up such an academic concept, is that 'Showbiz' is not as clever as they think it is. True, it never mopes as morosely as Thom Yorke's lot, but then it doesn't always have the ability to lift the soul either. So 'Unintended' and the title track are overwrought, prone to pseudo poetry, and barely a gothier Strangelove.

But if they sometimes go too far, Muse's high sense of drama makes perfect sense elsewhere. Mixing Radiohead with the odd flounce of early Suede, or the wailing algebraic lunacy of Mansun, they can produce mini epics. 'Uno' is an Addams family flamenco, jaggedly wallowing in unrequited love, just one small step away from an injunction for stalking, while takes on the well-worn path of brooding guitar pop.

In view of all of this, that title is the closest they get to a joke – because it seems certain Muse would rather peel back emotional scabs than actually go whoring down the Met Bar. It's not for the frivolous, but with a little fine tuning, escape from an oblivious West Country seems increasingly likely.

BANDEL

REPRINTED FROM NME JUNE 7 1999

NO BUSINESS LIKE IT
SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE
MAY 9, 2000

As 'Showbiz' begins to take off, Muse are showing more and more signs of emerging star potential

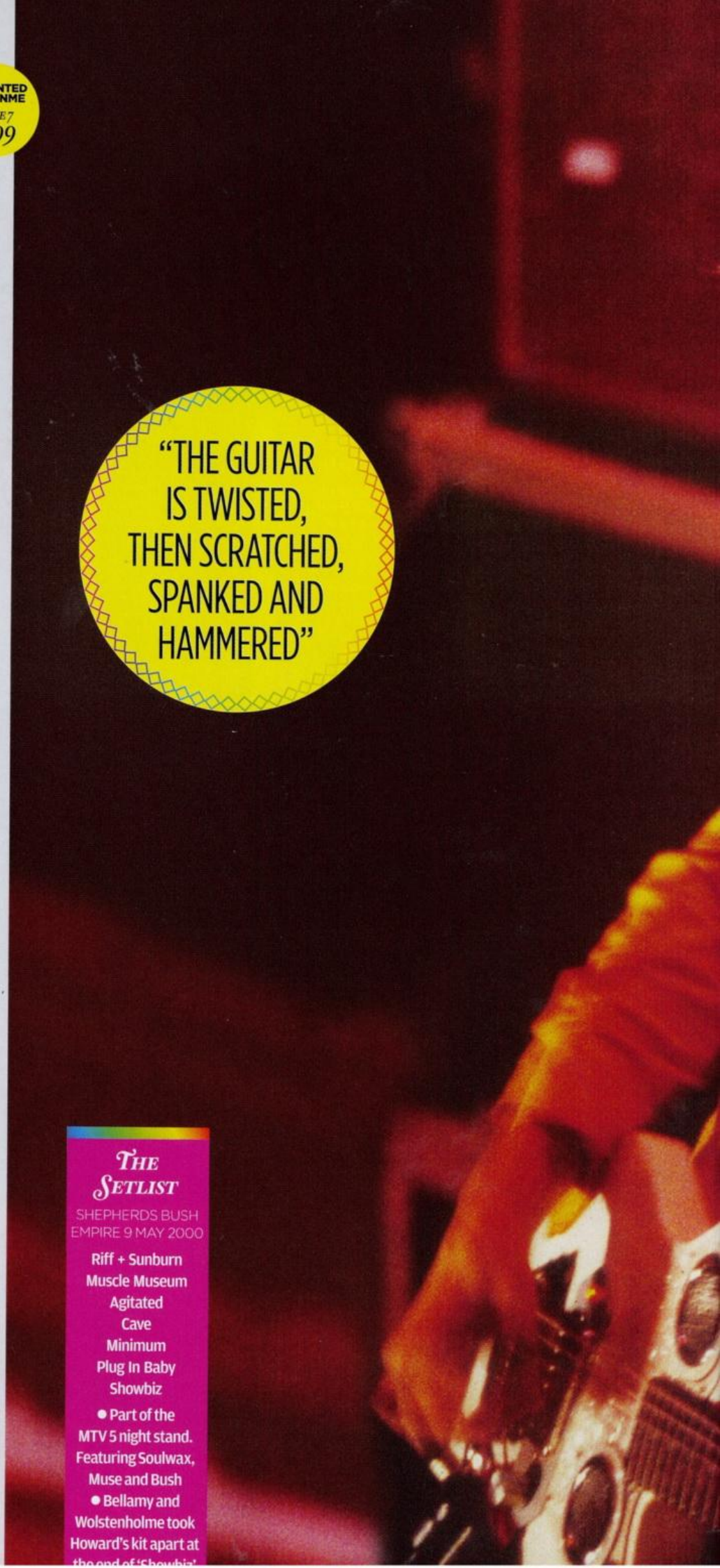
OK, let's pick the most obvious and obnoxious fly out on the Clearasil first. Will we need Muse when Radiohead finally get round to delivering their new album? On the evidence of this wired, muscular and borderline demented gig – fuck yes. There is so much more going on than singer-guitarist Matthew Bellamy's Yorko-style "Oh no, I'm suffering from almost unbearable existential angst whilst simultaneously experiencing soul-destroying alienation as a result of late capitalism's ever-accelerating descent into the denatured abyss of mindless consumerism" falsetto. Much more.

There's good old-fashioned, copper-bottomed cabaret here. Muse have at least half a dozen tunes – 'Sunburn', 'Cave' and 'Showbiz' included – which Ms Shirley Bassey could turn into 'Diamonds Are Forever' killer Bond movie theme tunes with ease. And Bellamy's tortured, bog-eyed, shagged-through-a-hedge-backwards Shock-Haired Peter schtick is utterly captivating. Someone give the young man some Valium and a comb and the key to the pie cupboard please!

And they rock. They utilise the Nirvana-patented slow & whiny bit/EVERYBODY IN THE HOUSE GO SCREAMING MAD POGO MENTAL! trick brilliantly. 'Kinnel yes they were only supporting Bush here tonight at this MTV-sponsored corporate cock-rock fest but to say they blew the Gavin's shite Nirvana-lite mob offstage would be a blatant understatement. They hunted Bush down, caught them, tortured them, slaughtered them, buried them, danced on their graves and then dug them up and ate them. Then shat them out and buried them again. It was like that scene in Amadeus where Wolfie Mozart utterly humiliates the balding Scarletti (*That'll be Sallieri – Classical Music Ed*).

The first (disappointingly slick and ever so slightly derivative) Muse album, 'Showbiz', only hints at the band's potential. They have in still-wet-behind-the-ears Matthew Bellamy – who looks and sounds like he spent his entire adolescence listening to Nirvana, Radiohead and Hendrix while feeding his ravenous tapeworm an endless supply of amphetamines – something of a borderline genius. There are moments – as in the frenetic delivery of the killer new track 'Plug In Baby' – when he almost breaks free of the Yorkoid/Cobanian straitjacket and flies. The guitar is twisted, scratched, spanked and hammered, you can see drummer Dominic Howard and bassist Chris Wolstenholme exchange nervous glances. And of course it would be dreadfully premature and utterly, utterly stupid to whisper the words 'Jimi Hendrix Experience' here. But whisper it we will.

Muse Mark One will conquer the hearts and minds of the production-line angst-rock obsessed American Midwest with ease. One only hopes that this will not satisfy them. Muse have the potential and the ability to rip rock a new arsehole. All they



"THE GUITAR IS TWISTED, THEN SCRATCHED, SPANKED AND HAMMERED"

THE SETLIST
SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE 9 MAY 2000

Riff + Sunburn
Muscle Museum
Agitated
Cave
Minimum
Plug In Baby
Showbiz

- Part of the MTV 5 night stand. Featuring Soulwax, Muse and Bush
- Bellamy and Wolstenholme took Howard's kit apart at the end of 'Showbiz'

THE STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS

From torching politicians to wanting to steal happiness from passing acquaintances, ***Matt Bellamy****'s lyrics are some of the most confrontational and imaginative in rock. Here he guides us through the thinking behind some of his most fascinating tracks...*

'BLISS'

One of 'Origin Of Symmetry's many pop highlights, 'Bliss' reminds Matt so much of his childhood because it unconsciously references the soundtrack tune to a Nintendo Top Gear game

"It's a song that talks about the peace and contentment that other people have, wanting to steal that. It touches me because it's really positive and uptempo and it sounds very '80s electro-pop, and for some reason that tickles something from my childhood."

'INVINCIBLE'

Part two of what Muse considered the centrepiece of 'Black Holes & Revelations' (the band saw it the positive side of the same story told in 'Soldier's Poem'), 'Invincible' was originally written in a cheap hotel in the Great Lakes area of America in 2005 when Matt was bed-ridden with a cold after the heavens opened during a band fishing trip

"When I wrote 'Invincible' the lyrics moved around on that song quite a bit. Originally it wasn't a love song at all. There were lines in it that were more politically orientated. It was like a socialist call, like – come on, let's all get together, let's go and burn down the Houses of Parliament. It was a little bit like something from V For Vendetta or something. Then for some reason I switched it over completely to being a love song. I wasn't comfortable with that either, so it ended up somewhere between the two. Not quite full on enough to be political and not quite obvious enough to be a love song – it's a song that you can apply to a few different things. Really, I'm just singing about change and how if you want it, it has to be done together. I feel that change really needs to take place."

'MAP OF THE PROBLEMATIQUE'

The danciest track from 'Black Holes & Revelations' refers to a book called Limits To Growth, commissioned by the Group Of Rome in 1972 to document the problems the world would face if population growth continued at the same rate and natural resources dwindled. It estimated that all of the Earth's natural resources would be used by 2070 and gave terrifying examples of famine and warfare that would result. To lessen the shock of the findings, critics have wrongly claimed the authors of the book predicted that oil reserves would be exhausted by '92

"I'M SINGING ABOUT CHANGE AND HOW IT HAS TO BE DONE TOGETHER"
MATT BELLAMY

"That's like our ode to the rave days. It's got a piano twinkle with an early '90s rave look in its eye. I was a teenager a little bit after the real explosion in the late '80s but I used to go and see Orbital and stuff, waving my arms in the air and waving little sticks. The guitar sound took three days to create and the rig took £20,000 to build, but I could have done with an extra week."

'UNITED STATES OF EURASIA'

The first track to be released from 'The Resistance', this epic track concerned a futuristic battle between the Americas and a joint European and Asian continent. The song was released via a global internet 'treasure hunt' whereby 'agents' had to unlock 'stations' by unravelling puzzles which led to them meeting Muse representatives in various cities across the world at an allocated time

"We definitely had a debate over [the Queen-mimicking falsetto line of 'United States Of Eurasia']. Every time we heard it, we were laughing. The song's supposed to have emotional meaning, after all, so can we let this epic Queen-like chord change be in it? In the end we thought, 'fuck it, we love it, it's in!'"

MUSE'S MADDEST LYRICS

'KNIGHTS OF CYDONIA'

The epic closer of 'Black Holes And Revelations' is a fantasy sci-fi cowboy story about a Lone Ranger style figure roaming the Cydonia region of Mars, which Matt believes might once have supported life. The song includes a tribute to Matt's father – Tremelos guitarist George Bellamy – as Matt guitar sound exactly like the clavioline sound on The Tremelos biggest hit 'Telstar'.

'MEGALOMANIA'

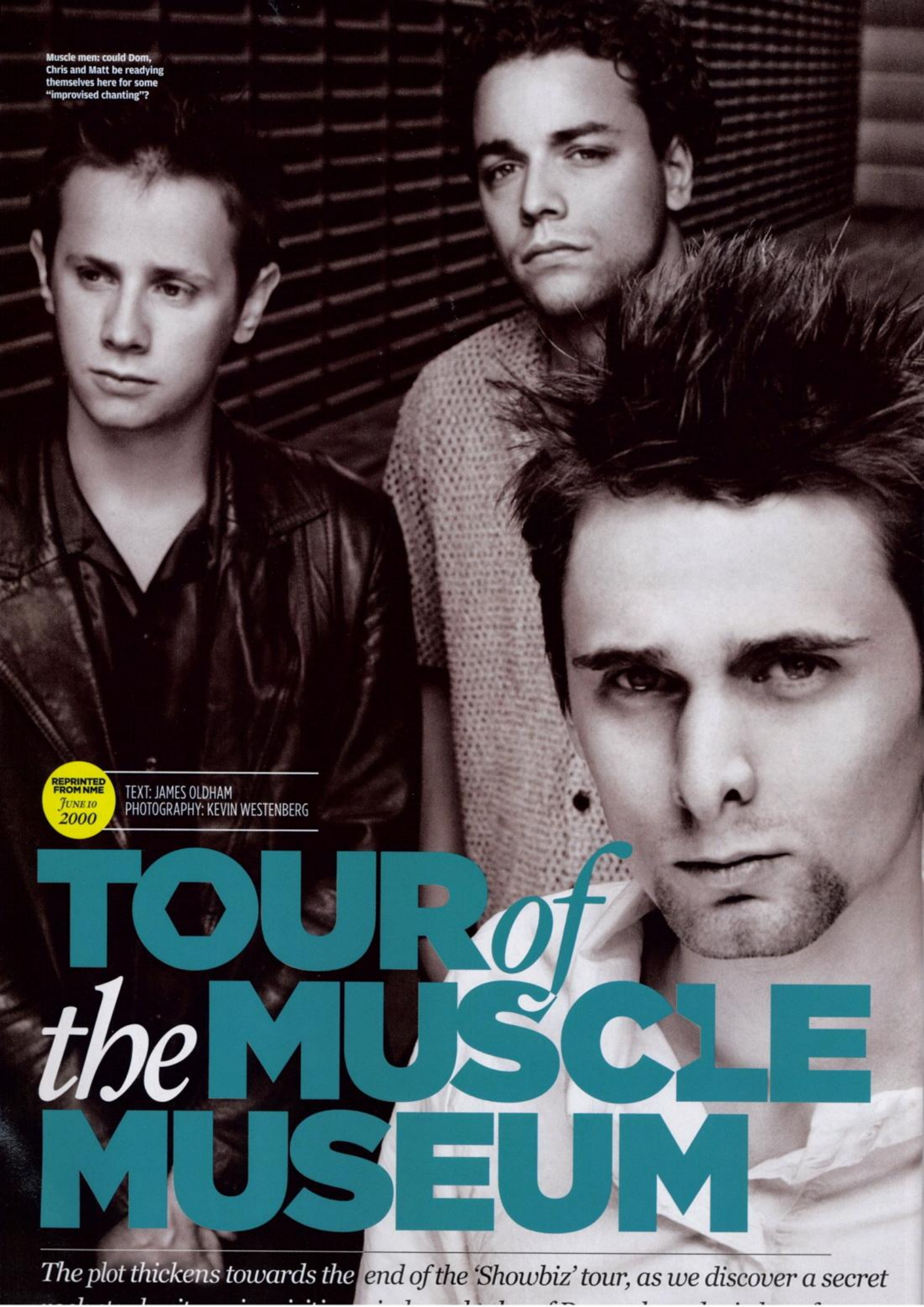
In order to give 'Megalomania' the huge, churchy feel the band were after, Muse trawled the cathedrals of Bath & Wells looking for a church organ they could play it on. St Mary's Church in Bathwick allowed them access to their organ, on the agreement that the church could see a lyric sheet of the song to make sure the band

'APOCALYPSE PLEASE'

'Absolution''s overblown opener was inspired by the Iraq War and featuring some rather radical ideas on religion – it's essentially the story of a man calling on his God to come down and solve the world's problems and argues that religious-thinking leaders subconsciously yearn to fulfil their faith's apocalypse predictions in order to validate their beliefs. The recording sessions weren't quite so serious though – the sound of marching was made by a gravel pathway and Dom's drums were recorded in the studio's swimming pool, laying on lilos wearing only a nappy.

'TAKE A BOW'

In order to record 'Black Holes And Revelations', Muse convinced the owner of a disused studio in the remote Chateau Miraval in France to re-open the studio where Pink Floyd recorded 'The Wall'. Holed up in the chateau for months on end with no TV, internet or phone contact with the outside world, inevitable world wars, population control and tyrany that would result from the impending oil crisis, inspired by *Crossing The Rubicon* by ex-LAPD narcotics investigator Michael C Ruppert. Terrified by what they heard, the band grew beards, considered buying livestock and guns to live off the land and protect themselves and even started to wonder if World War III had already kicked off and they were too remote to have heard about it yet. The result:



Muscle men: could Dom, Chris and Matt be readying themselves here for some "improvised chanting"?

REPRINTED FROM NME JUNE 10 2000

TEXT: JAMES OLDHAM
PHOTOGRAPHY: KEVIN WESTENBERG

TOUR of the MUSCLE MUSEUM

The plot thickens towards the end of the 'Showbiz' tour, as we discover a secret

The moment Muse stride onstage at Berlin's Columbia Fritz, the argument about whether they're just another indie band crashes comprehensively to its knees. Preceded by resounding choral chants and illuminated by three radioactive white cones, they spend the next 60 minutes overwhelming their German audience with waves of serrated noise and Spinal Tap atmospherics.

Arabic scales, Hendrix Experience burnouts, white noise, cascading melodies and singer Matt Bellamy's bone-china falsetto all merge into one epic cacophony that's part Queen, part Vatican mass. By the end, bassist Chris Wolstenholme is being carried around the auditorium on his back, while Bellamy stands high on a speaker stack with his guitar behind his head. Finally, he kicks the amp to the floor and hurls himself into Dominic Howard's drumkit. Centre stage, one girl, already waving her arms furiously above her head, starts to scream.

Muse have been doing this for a year – slogging from territory to territory, playing gig after gig and gradually constructing this gonzoid rock alter ego. Bar the odd flash of random destruction (a Munich dressing room at a cost of £3,000), it's been a seamless rise. 'Showbiz', has already sold over 250,000 copies worldwide (70,000 in Blighty), and their next single, 'Unintended', is expected to be their first Top Ten hit.

Muse differentiate themselves from their peers by thinking big. They're the only new group to want it badly enough to flog themselves around every venue in Europe. And then do it all again. This summer they're due to undertake trench warfare at over 40 festivals. They have nothing in common with Embrace or Idlewild or any of the other indie foot soldiers you might care to mention, they're on a different plain. Even their tourbus looks like it was designed by NASA.

Ask them a simple question about what they're listening to and they'll start talking about Hector Berlioz, a 19th Century French composer whose 'Grande Messe Des Morts' was conceived as a soundtrack to Judgement Day. Sure, they're pretentious, ludicrous even, but that's good. Muse are a proper, tonight-we-take-Valhalla rock group – and Britain hasn't had one of those for a while.

But for all that, you could still be suspicious. Twenty-four hours earlier NME certainly was. To the casual observer, Muse seem fake and calculated, a band who've lucked out because holiday. In a different time, maybe they'd mean nothing – but that's why they're currently sitting opposite us in this secluded Italian restaurant, attempting to justify themselves.

"I'll always express what I feel, but I can't really work out what's driving it. Deep down, it could be greed or other sick stuff or it could just be wanting to be loved by everyone, I don't know. When you say, 'Can you trust us?' What do you mean?"

Well, that Radiohead and Nirvana and Jeff Buckley obviously weren't/aren't putting it on, and we don't know whether you are.

"Well, it's fucking difficult, isn't it? He suddenly snaps. "Are you fucked up? I don't know. You look at an artist like Tom Waits and he's always been questioned about how real he is. When he first came out, everyone said he was a copy of Captain Beefheart and just a rip-off. When I saw him, though, I just believed him. Whether he's lived a life that equates with his words, I don't know, but he can definitely tap into those emotions."

> "I'LL ALWAYS EXPRESS WHAT I FEEL, BUT I CAN'T WORK OUT WHAT DRIVES IT"
> MATT BELLAMY

And there's the crux. Muse's debut album is a brutal explosion of skewed gothic angst. It contains one song ('Falling Down') that appropriates the blues. It contains another ('Sunburn') that rails against the corporate nature of the music industry. The rest of it is a masterclass in generalised torment. Muse are all roughly 21 and are currently enjoying great success in their chosen profession. Some people wonder exactly why it is that they're making music like this.

All three of them spent their formative years in the archetypal nowhere town of Teignmouth in Devon – a place that, as described in previous interviews, has made The League of Gentlemen look tame. There, they experienced similar frustrations to those of thousands of other teenagers. They were bored, they were destructive and they wanted to get out. But there were differences.

"The way this band was formed," explains Matt, sipping a glass of red wine, "was that there was this whole collective of musicians who had nothing to do. There was this dark energy that was very negative towards the town from which they came. Out of that, there were all sorts of weird amalgamations, with people doing this witchcraft stuff. It wasn't anything really, I suppose. It was just kids.

"There were three girls in particular that I hung around with, and they did kind of improvised chanting. All that came out of it were moments of feeling very emotional and really weird, but that was it. And I just hung around with them, because there was a big break-up of friends and I... I was kind of separated from them."

Matt's adolescence was unusual in other ways too. His mother was a medium (and Matt himself would dabble regularly with Ouija boards), while his father was a former guitarist in The Tornadoes – a '60s group produced by Britain's own Phil Spector, Joe Meek. Matt's dad would often tell him stories about how Meek would throw mixing desks at the group and draw guns on them in recording sessions (Meek eventually shot his landlady in the face and then blew his own head off).

Matt's parents separated when he was 13 – and from then on he was brought up by his grandmother. At the key moment in his life, he was being guided by someone two

Matt backstage at the Columbia Fritz, shortly before giving Berlin a show they won't forget

generations removed from him. This inevitably created tensions – tensions which mostly found release through musical outlets (he was in a series of bands called awful things like Gothic Plague throughout this period).

"Onstage, I felt free from the restrictions of everyday life," he explains now. "Music has done that to me since the age of six. It's difficult to talk about that stuff. I didn't get that state from listening to music, it's always been the playing of music that's done it for me, even when all I knew was the Dallas theme tune when I was five. I remember my brother saying something like, 'That's cool, you can play that.' It was therapeutic. I can't really explain."

Music, however, wasn't his only release. When this interview is over, he takes *NME* to one side and explains how he was also drawn to certain criminal activities, some quite serious. What he says is off the record, but clearly – if Muse hadn't taken off – his life would now be following a very different path. It might also explain why he's prone to saying things like: "I'm interested in the subconscious, the questions around the purpose of our existence. When you delve into that, it's like a black hole that goes nowhere. The deeper you go, the brain reacts in a way that's creative, that's just what happens to humans when they go that way."

But it doesn't really.

What's certain is that Matt's upbringing has served as a powerful motivating force in the band's rise. It's why when they were 17 and 18, he would force Dominic and Chris to slog around Devon playing endless gigs to deserted pubs, and how eventually he managed to persuade someone to fly the band to New York for the annual CMJ Music Conference (the place they were spotted, [illegible] signing to Madonna's Maverick label in the US). It also helps you to understand the mental state of the group when they finally started to record 'Showbiz'.

"For me", admits Matt, "it was weird. It was the movement from a small town to this place where I was suddenly surrounded by loads of people saying, 'You're a genius.' I just thought, 'Jesus, what's going on? I've been making music for five years and now everyone says it's going to be massive.' I just disbelieved all of it and found it very uncomfortable. And I guess that's what the album's about, the move from playing pubs in Devon to flying out to different countries and signing record deals in every one of them (Muse have a different deal in every territory)."

That doesn't sound like cause for anguish, though, it sounds more like a cause for celebration.

"There was no conscious intention to do anything," argues Matt, "it was just how we were feeling at the time. I'm not sure it was pain and anguish..."

He trails off.

"...Look, you say ('Showbiz') is about anguish and pain, but those things are part of being human, and some people don't want to face up to certain things about life, but I don't find those things are painful to face up to. I don't find it unpleasant to admit it."

Most teenagers never give death a second though. Do you think it's strange that you did?

"You're getting into weird territory..." he says, lowering his voice. "We've all got our personal reasons why we understand a bit more about it. I don't think this is the time or place to get into it. Two of my close friends had relatives who died... (the table falls ominously silent).

"Look", he rallies quickly, "If you listen to the music and believe it's fraudulent, I don't care, go away. I don't need to win people over. People who get it, will get it, and people who don't, just don't. I'm not desperate to win over people who fucking don't. I'm just concerned with the people who can relate to it. The people who don't get it have obviously got personal experiences which clash with ours. That's life. I'm not going to change myself to try to get on with everybody. It's impossible."

If you're looking for proof about the validity of his music, then here it is. When Matt talks about his band, he does so clearly and passionately. His life to date has been a struggle, and what you hear on 'Showbiz' – despite its baroque excesses and occasionally gauche lyrical content – is the sound of that. There is extremity there, but not for the sake of it. And that's what people have tapped into.

Muse are self-evidently part of a tradition that includes not only bands like Radiohead and Nirvana, but also Richey-era Manics and maybe even The Cure. Their fanbase can be characterised by its comparative youthfulness – and Bellamy has confessed in the past that he's "aiming to speak to people (his) age and younger."

"I think one of the reasons why I said that is because I don't assume I've got more knowledge than someone who's lived on the planet for longer than me," he says with a shrug of his shoulders. "I can understand why people older than us would go, 'That's crap.' People are unsettled by youth. I don't really want to affect people who've lived for longer than me.

"I know what I'd feel if some younger person was singing something they felt was speaking to me. I'm noticing with age my opinions change and contradict what I thought when I was younger. I can only really talk about what I know, I don't really want to conflict with other people's lives which have been longer and more experienced than mine."

"I SEE WHY PEOPLE OLDER THAN US MIGHT SEE US AND GO, 'CRAP'"
MATT BELLAMY

Do you think that's why your fans are younger than a lot of other 'indie' groups?

"Some of the stuff that I'm thinking about is more in tune with people who've been brought up in my time," he decides. "It's to do with technology. In Japan, they've managed to combine massive technological advances with religion, whereas over here we've abandoned one for the other. I think there's a lot of soulless feeling around, and it affects people of this generation more than anyone."

This is the standard Muse response when you mention the word 'R-d--h--d'

All this from a band who are often accused of being apolitical (notoriously, they once refused to comment on the election of the far-right government in Austria). Perhaps their thoughts operate on a more, ahem, global scale.

"People really want us to care about those things (eg, the situation in Austria)," sighs Matt, "and I can understand why people get passionately offended by us not knowing certain things, but no-one's perfect. I'd rather not talk about it really. I don't think a band's views on politics are relevant unless they mention it in their songs. Anything that's political in our songs is more on a spiritual level than a parliamentary level."

And on that bombshell, it's time to order another bottle of wine.

Muse are a band developing fast. Their live shows, in all their riotous Andrew Lloyd Webber glory, already transcend anything that you'll hear on 'Showbiz' – and they're showcasing one or two new songs that, bad titles like 'Plug In Baby' aside, are a radical departure from anything they've written to date. Just as Radiohead's 'The Bends' succeeded the prosaic 'Pablo Honey', there's a real feeling that the same is about to happen to Muse.

They might be a group who willingly admit that they submit to their record company's wishes when it comes to promotion, but that's apparently where the interference ends. They've already got together nine or ten songs, but no-one should hold their breath just yet, because the earliest they'll start

"The thing that's in us," says Matt, newly refreshed with Italian red, "is the fear of repetition; I'm never going to make an album for the sake of it just because people are giving us studio time. I made that clear from the start. We'll only start making the second album when we've reached a stage where we can offer something radically different from what we documented on 'Showbiz'.

"I suppose, right now, I'm in the middle of a transition. Some of the films I've seen since 'Showbiz' have influenced me, things like *Being John Malkovich*, *Fight Club* and *The Matrix*. Why? Because they're the first films I've seen that have made me think, 'this is what I've been thinking about.'"

So we should expect a bleak, anti-capitalist polemic then?

"I have that in me," he deadpans. "I'm trying to work out if I want to destroy society or make it a better place. That's not really what the songs are about though..."

No?

"Well, one or two of the songs are about how we've abandoned religion in favour of technology in this culture, while other countries don't," he says, returning to an earlier theme. "I want to talk more about the links between us and how they get affected by the way we live, the jobs we have and the technologies we use and how they serve to separate us. And much I've changed in the last five years."

So there you go, it's going to be a bit like 'OK Computer' (only joking). All of which leaves NME with only one final question to ask. Would you rather be famous or make a critically acclaimed album?

"That's a good question," laughs Matt quietly. "It would be nice to think that what you've done is good enough to connect with millions of people, but I don't want to flog a dead horse if it's not going to happen. If what I do is not in tune with other people then fair enough, I'll live with it."

That doesn't answer the question.

"Well, I'm not sure (getting flustered)."

Look: would you rather be Bush or The Velvet Underground.

"Er, I don't know. The Velvet Underground," he blurts out suddenly. "Even if I don't know them. Jesus."

Having reduced Matt to a state of confused agitation, NME's tape recorder clicks off. Muse want to be like The Velvet Underground. Only popular. They will continue to play a lot of gigs until that happens. Some people think they're the best new band in Britain. Now you've met them and discovered they're not just corporate lapdogs, it's time for you to decide. You should probably hurry up, though. Virtually

"OUR POLITICS ARE ON A SPIRITUAL, NOT PARLIAMENTARY LEVEL"

MATT BELLAMY

Photographer Tom Sheenan: "I watched them play a show in some massive sports hall in Moscow (the support was a bunch of Russian folk singers and dancers!). The next day we went off to Red Square to take some 'tourist' shots. There were a few stalls selling all sorts of military memorabilia and bric-a-brac. I remember Muse had to barter a lot, as all the prices were so inflated!"

№2
R1

Are MUSE CRACKING Up?

In the studio during the recording of 'Origin Of Symmetry', and the talk is of nude mushroom benders, Japanese orgies and the metal spikes in their heads

REPRINTED FROM NME MARCH 10 2001

TEXT: MARK BEAUMONT
PHOTOGRAPHY: ANTONIO PETRONZIO

The second time Matt Bellamy thought he was losing his mind was when he started eating the maggots. It was the third day that Muse had spent naked together in the Jacuzzi and any hint of sanity had been blasted clean out of his brain by Mother Nature's finest grade magic mushrooms. His bandmates sat giggling in the bubbles as he watched the sliver of the mushroom in his palm morph from vegetable to worm, then start squirming wildly. He took a deep breath, closed his eyes, popped it in his mouth and started chewing.

And instantly went deaf in one ear.

"We were recording in Ridge Farm studios," Matt gibbers, gabbling furiously away as if puking words. "We finished the first five songs for the album and then we woke up one morning and there was this field full of mushrooms right next to the studio. So we ate them all. We had to have everything remixed because we were all in a Jacuzzi together eating maggots. They did turn into maggots and we're not really sure why that was."

"IT ALL NEEDED REMIXING, AS WE WERE IN A JACUZZI TOGETHER EATING MAGGOTS"
MATT BELLAMY

The first time Matt Bellamy thought he was losing his mind had been when the spikes started coming for him. It was midway through last year's gruelling festival tour through Europe, Japan and Australia and the strain was starting to show. He dyed his hair a different colour every other day and painted the veins on his arms black "because it looked cool". These stage shows had become so destructive and unpredictable that Muse had been banned by eastern Europe's biggest equipment hire company and eaten up most of the budget for their second album in trashed guitars and presidential suite orgies (in Japan they became notorious for entertaining as many of the locals at once as possible). At the end of one insane gig Matt got himself wedged inside one of the huge plastic cones of their stage set and had to roll under the drum riser until the crowd left the building, the Tasmanian devil meets Derek Smalls.

"I'm not sure it could go further than that," Matt ponders. "It's like death. You feel like time is running out and you've got to make a difference in the remaining moments you have onstage. It's about squeezing in as much as you can before you go".

Munching cold bacon in the palatial back room of a top secret barge studio on the Thames, where Muse are carving the final slashes into the neck of their second album, Matt, sweet yet sullen bassist Chris Wolstenholme and baby-faced booze-liking drummer Dominic Howard are relaxed, un-dyed, and thankfully fully clothed. They're buoyant in anticipation of bringing the whole of creation to its knees when faced with their new single 'Plug in Baby' - Phantom of the Opera meets The Clash on Neptune – a surefire Number One-with-a-scud-missclile smasheroonie. But last summer, as their sci-fi grand punk blitzkrieg left a trail of blood, spunk and injured bouncers across the globe they were a musical and psychological time bomb, a band pushing the pedal through the metal, on a highway to hell straddling the back of madam Hedonism's flaming Harley But in the end, man, it was the water that finally fucked them up.

"I've got a problem with drinking water," Matt confesses. "I'm not very good at it. When I first went out on tour I used to get dehydrated and I used to get these really bad headaches at this point here (points to the back of his head). I didn't realise that it was because I wasn't drinking. I remember I was having these strange hallucinations of this triangular blade, really silver metallic, razor sharp. I was in this landscape, completely arid, grey, dead, with an endless horizon; it's like a bigger planet than this one because the horizon was so flat and it went on forever. The sky was baking blue, burning heat and I was in there trying to dodge these blades that were flying about everywhere. One would always go and cut me right in there. And it wouldn't cut my head, it'd just

Symmetry buisness: Matt rests between solos and (below), the boys entertain producer John Leckie

What Was Happening

- George Bush is elected President of USA
- Wikipedia launches
- Strokes release 'The Modern Age EP'
- Shaggy's 'It Wasn't Me' Number 1

sort of go in and I could feel it cutting into my brain. It wouldn't damage the exterior of my head. I used to have that recurring, it seemed like more than a dream to me, it seemed like it was really happening; it was with me during the day, travelling on planes, I couldn't stop thinking about it. "

I'd drink more water, mate.

"I saw a programme on TV one night," Matt continues, "and they were talking about Psywar, psychological warfare and the influences that governments have had over their populations in order to make them believe they're having a war for the right reasons, things like that. How they can use mobile phones, they can use the microwaves inside the things to do stuff to us. I thought that was what was happening."

You thought the government was trying to control your brain through your mobile phone?

"Not necessarily the government but I went through a number of different theories. It got to the point where I was thinking that maybe that's what real life is like and this is all a dream. Then I thought it was one of a number of phobias I had and then I went to the doctor and he told me to drink more water and that was that."

But it's the obedience drugs in the water that they're using to keep us down, brothers! Ahem, pass the Evian. Cheers.

As Lee 'Scartch' Perry would tell you, the eagle of genius he don't come a-swoopin' 'less madness be his perch, my cauliflowers. And Matt Bellamy is a class-A, top-grade, split personality psycho-bastard top rock nutter in excelsis. A full year of on-the-road mayhem, plus a string of mid-table hits from their half-million-selling debut album, Showbiz, was like feeding the nervy, insecure mogwai Matt of '99 medicine after midnight and unleashing the slavering, razor-toothed monster Matt. He considers himself to be some kind of mental cyborg-cum-Etch-A-Sketch who can erase all elements of his "bored and frustrated" pre-Muse personality and "download" a brand new one from passing acquaintances. His formative experiences involve throwing newborn baby chicks at a wall ("But only

The guest bedroom proves the best place for Matt to lay down his vocal takes

print that if you point out that I was six at the time") and breaking the necks of wildfowl for 50p a time as a fetching boy on posho pheasant shoots. Onstage he treats his guitar like an escaping burglar and gets the Red Mist at the tiniest technical error. He's a hardcore Hannibal, Norman Bates with a road crew, *Seven* turned up to 11.

Rather like the new Muse album as it happens. Furiously trying to gnaw its way out of the traps as we speak, it's an expansive, explosive knacker-smack of a record that'll leave the NAM veterans gawping in their exhaust dust, wondering where their eyebrows have gone. Previews of the completed (as yet untitled) tracks display a vista-scraping ambition that takes in church organ grandeur, twinkly synth experimentation and chunks of rock that makes *Deep Impact* look like *Singing In The Rain*. It's Muse fulfilling every inch of gushing hype and more and its major thematic concerns are death, rioting, death, metal spikes in your brain, death, the ever circling conundrums of the universe, death, death, and death.

"I've written a song which I think I'm gonna call the 'Thoughts Of A Dying Atheist'," Bellamy announces. "I'm trying to imagine what it would be like to die in that situation, at that last moment, when you truly believe it is actually the end. I try to conjure up the thoughts that you'd be going through. I can't find anything I can believe in, and that's the problem. Any religion I can see the flaws very quickly. Also, even if it's pure science, everything that seems to be coming out of that is anti-human. If we really wanted to evolve using science then we'd genetically redesign better creatures that could actually live in space and breathe other atmospheres. And fly. But the thing we were talking about is the death-bed one and it's like, if that really is the end, you'd want to go back and have to most amoral existence you could ever have. So if that really is the case, why aren't we all going wild?"

Okaaaay. But before we all strip naked, neck a bucket of heroin and go turkey-fucking in the streets, do you think Muse's time has come?

Matt laughs: "Hyip-hyip-hyip! I hope not. I'm glad that we didn't get big straight away. It'd be nice to experience what it was like being in a massive band, the biggest band ever, that'd be cool, but it'd be nicer to have earned it gradually because then you know how to enjoy it. It's taken me a while to learn how to enjoy this. If it comes along now I'll know what to do with it. Blow it all, that's what it's there for. If I get it, it'll be for the purpose of burning it."

> "I'M GLAD THAT WE DIDN'T GET BIG STRAIGHT AWAY. I'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO NOW"
> MATT BELLAMY

Cling on tight because Muse are a star about to go supernova. Turn on, plug in, burn out.

The Artwork

Though the design chosen for the official cover was the alien rugby post/aerial look of William Eager, Muse commissioned 12 different pieces of artwork from modern artists, including Darren Gibbs, Leo Marcantonio, Butch Gordon and Tony Oladipo for Origin of Symmetry. Each were instructed to work from the title as inspiration; the concept was intended to mirror the album's theory of the symmetry of the universe by having twelve very different artworks linked by one unifying idea.

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JUNE 12
2001

The Great Leap Forward

ORIGIN OF SYMMETRY

Tentative first steps now well out of the way, it's time for our heroes to offer bold evidence of the bombastic thrills that would define them

The Details

New Born ★★★★★
Bliss ★★★★★
Space Dementia ★★★★
Hyper Music ★★★★
Plug In Baby ★★★★★
Citizen Erased ★★★★
Micro Cuts ★★★
Screenager ★★★
Darkshines ★★
Feeling Good ★★★★
Megalomania ★★★

Released: June 17, 2001
Recorded: Ridge Farm, Surrey; Real World, Wiltshire, Astoria Studios, London
Chart Position: 3
Singles: Plug In Baby, New Born, Bliss, HyperMusic/Feeling Good

The inner sleeve of Muse's second album contains an illustration by Darrell Gibbs depicting humans marching into a giant white cube. In tiny lettering above the door, a sign reads 'CHAOS'. Welcome indeed to the beautiful nightmare world of the most distorting, cartoon intense, baroque'n'roll band that Britain has ever produced.

Here comes their razorblade stuffed-toy singer Matt Bellamy, hanging from the chandelier of his overblown musical ability, electrodes screwed into his brain, singing like a harpy on fire, playing the funeral mass organ with his toes. Here's bassist Chris Wolstenholme and drummer Dominic Howard sounding like Edvard Munch's backing band. And here unfolds the profane, expressionist, hyper-thrilling vista feared by all those hoping the band were just Radiohead with a Freddie Mercury complex.

In two years of public life Muse have accumulated a high-pressured mythology. Half a million copies of their debut 'Showbiz' strewn a totemic trail of destroyed equipment, confessed to a taste for mushrooms, seances and Hector Berlioz's 'Grande Messe Des Morts', and announced, "If I couldn't do this I wouldn't want to live".

The stakes were high. Their reinvention of grunge as a neo-classical, high gothic future rock, full of flambéd pianolas and white-knuckle electric camp, is a precarious venture. Yet as the bloody abattoir riff kicks in on 'New Born', colliding with Bellamy's fairy dreamtime piano, it's apparent that Muse can handle their brutal arias.

Almost everything on 'Origin Of Symmetry' is overstated, but with Matt reined in by the constraints of a dirty rock three-piece, the operatic stuff is devastatingly channelled. 'Bliss' is all carnage riffs and a pleasingly corrupt lyric about innocence envy. 'Space Dementia' sets Bellamy's grand piano mastery up against vaulting rock. 'Hyper Music' burns with a genuinely new, art punk rage.

Given the ultra-vivid tones of Muse's palette – purity, insanity, corruption, virtual consciousness, Bach, metal and barking

their overstepping. A happy Bellamy singing (literally) to the butterflies on 'Feeling Good' sits oddly, and the organ fugue finale is somewhat Hammer horror, even if the track's called 'Megalomania'. But relentlessly, on 'Dark Shines', 'Screenager', particularly 'Micro Cuts' and of course 'Plug In Baby', they add vicious, original serrations to the hysterical edge of extreme rock. It's amazing for such a young band to load up with a heritage that includes the darker visions of Cobain and Kafka, Mahler and The Tiger Lillies, Cronenberg and Schoenberg, and make a sexy, populist album. But Muse have carried it off. It's their 'Siamese Dream'. Now begins the psychoanalysis.

Thom Yorke's least favourite word is 'angst'; Matt Bellamy's is about to become 'psychotic'. But this is going to be a good thing, because we're the lucky ones who get to look at the pretty shapes as the blood

Roger Morton

JS PARRINDER

"If you print this, people will think I'm a mental person"

Gearing up for their Docklands Arena show, Muse want to share some things with us: namely the secrets of their success and the mysteries of the universe

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2001

TEXT: VICTORIA SEGAL
PHOTOGRAPHY: HAMISH BROWN

They are, says 15-year-old Federica, crouched patiently by the venue's perimeter fence, "molto profundo". For Stephania, smouldering gothically in a Cradle Of Filth T-shirt, they are "even more energetic than any black metal band", while according to Anna and Erica, clear-skinned 17-year-old Led Zeppelin fans, "They make us feel something that the other bands do not." Tonight, Muse headline the 6,000-capacity Pala Vobis, a monstrous insect-shaped arena nesting in Milan's middle-of-nowhere industrial estate. Even at four o'clock in the afternoon, their appearance is hotly – not to mention very seriously – anticipated by the teenagers at the gates.

Maybe it's because of their more extreme musical tendencies, but the people who like Muse really, really like them. They're the kind of band that doesn't so much have fans as devotees. Occupying their own chill world of madness and confusion, producing music that crashes and thunders with all the dramatic passion of door-slamming, hormonal emotions – it's unsurprising that Muse should provoke an equally intense response in their audience.

"Last night we had a bit of a gathering and I was chatting to people," explains singer Matt Bellamy, sitting in the band's well-appointed hotel the following afternoon, "and suddenly someone started grabbing at my neck and pulling on my chain and I was like, 'Ow, I am human.'"

He pauses pensively.

"Maybe because we were semi-naked and had blue lighting wrapped around our bodies they thought we were a piece of art to be

Is this your usual aftershow costume?

"We sometimes go to fancy dress shops and stock up on masks and lighting and novelty items," says Matt. "It makes it a bit more social when everyone's dressed up, it stops things turning into a signing session."

Blue-haired drummer Dom Howard leans forward excitedly: "I've got this really cool cowboy hat which is going well. White with a star on it."

"I've got a massive, massive sombrero that's about four-foot wide," admits bassist Chris Wolstenholme.

And Matt?

"I've got a French policeman's hat with a visor that comes down so I'm behind a screen. It's like a riot helmet!"

Ah, yes. Molto profundo.

When Muse first appeared with their excitable Bohemian rhapsodies for the post-grunge generation, few people envisaged that this curious musical hybrid would be capable of selling 200,000 records (as their last album, 'Origin Of Symmetry' has in Britain alone) or requiring a venue the size of London's 12,500-capacity Docklands Arena. After all, they tap the mood of the times only if you happen to live in a pre-antibiotic world of syphilitic madness and over-the-counter laudanum.

In 2001, where all bases are seemingly covered by nu-metal doom, gentle Buckley-

they seem like a band only a madman could love. Yet while Muse might turn out to be modern rock's Mr Creosote – music stuffed so full of grandeur and ornament that one more wafer-thin piano phrase could make it all explode – their two albums, 'Showbiz' and 'Origin Of Symmetry', have struck a suitably epic chord with an increasingly large audience.

"Often we'll verge on embarrassing territory, a certain over-the-topness," laughs Matt. "But maybe that's just trying to unveil something that's inside all of us. If you extracted the bass drum and the guitar and the microphone and put me in a lonesome room at certain moments in the set I'd look like an embarrassing screaming maniac. A little bit laughable, maybe."

> "DO I DELIBERATELY PROVOKE PEOPLE? NO, BECAUSE THEY'D BEAT ME UP!"
> MATT BELLAMY

Hysteria, however, is breaking out at Pala Vobis even before 'Plug In Baby' gets a chance to whip itself into a frenzy. Today's major topic of conversation are the news reports claiming two 14-year-old boys in southern Italy stabbed a girl "in honour" of Marilyn Manson. Last year, Manson was held responsible for the behaviour of three schoolgirls who were found guilty of murdering a nun as she walked through their sleepy small town. Rock'n'roll is not getting a particularly good press in Italy at the moment.

"Is that alienation?" sighs fan Stephania wisely. "It depends what goes on in your head. It's not Marilyn Manson who makes you kill people. It's not Matt Bellamy who makes you alienated. There are kids who listen to classical music who are alienated."

Matrix men: not surprisingly, it turned out that Dom, Matt and Chris are all huge fans of Larry and Andy Wachowski's science fiction classic. Thus it was not difficult to convince them to dress up for this very special photoshoot

pounding away at the piano with increasingly baroque abandon, a Phantom Of The Opera who can set his sights beyond Sarah Brightman, and you think, maybe she has a point.

The band say they've recently noticed a preponderance of Slipknot T-shirts in their audience, yet Muse's take on the evergreen alienation schtick has little to do with all-out, counsellor-worrying rage. Just as the Manics had their wave of self-mutilation, The Smiths encouraged celibacy and floral tributes, and Suede empowered the sexually ambivalent, Muse offer something for people who realise that pondering death's sting to a bedroom soundtrack of Rachmaninov is more likely to startle your parents and impress your peers than Identikit fits of nu-metal petulance.

"I don't know anyone who is an insider," Matt will say. "I don't know anyone who's completely... 'borg'."

Maybe it's no coincidence that the tour soundtrack is shaping up to be The Smiths. Matt quotes lyrics from 'Half A Person' and 'How Soon Is Now?' in conversation, while 'The Best Of The Smiths' forms an incongruous soundtrack to their aftershow gathering in the bunker-like Pala Vobis dressing room.

As 'Please Please Please Let Me Get What I Want' plays plaintively in the background, a clutch of beautiful Milanese girls pick through the trails of blue fairy lights. One, you notice, is already wearing the riot helmet.

"I USED TO FIND MATT IN A DRAMA GROUP SOMEWHERE, IN TEARS"
DOMINIC HOWARD

It's not just Italian goths who have taken Muse to their theatrical hearts, however. Despite initial derision from their homeland, Muse's domestic position is strengthening at an impressive rate. As the hotel's cabaret piano ripples genteelly in the background, Muse address the implications of their surging fame and the size of the Docklands show.

"I think it's a bit too big, maybe," admits Matt, who talks like he plays the piano, the drumming of his fingers later threatening to drown out the tape. "But Dom thinks it's alright. Dom wants to be a stadium rock drummer and have a sweat towel tech. We're working a lot with video so you get close-ups of pianos and Dom's bass drum – things you wouldn't even see in a pub gig. Extreme close-up and extreme distance at the same time, which I think goes with the music."

He's right. For while their songs might deal with space and scars and "puppet strings to our souls", Muse would rather hang out with their fans than encourage them to write letters in their own blood, revelling in the sense of community they experience while on the road. Matt gets almost emotional about the video shoot for new single 'Hyper Music'/'Feeling Good' where fans were bussed in as extras.

"I could see people looking at us a bit funny," explains Matt. "So I just went in when this guy was telling them all to stand behind a line and stay there I went round the back and got in there with them.

"It got to me," he twitches. "I saw something, I saw something... I saw some beauty for a moment... A weird amount of friendliness. That really got to me – I got a feeling of what it was like for other people to be into the music."

And they all laugh.

Bands usually prefer to depict themselves as the moody outsiders, misunderstood, like an unholy mix of Marlon Brando and James Dean – even if they were actually prefects who captained the football team and got Valentines from half their year. After all, only Limp Bizkit fans crave a band who is establishment. In theory, Muse – mocked by their peers, considered 'weird', at odds with the prevailing consensus – should understand genuine teenage outsiderdom.

"I was friends with everyone," says Matt, contradictorily. "I used to do a lot of drama in school – we used to go away on trips to nice places that were haunted and do improvised activities. Dom used to take the piss out of me but the truth is I was doing it because there was this girl I wanted to have sex with."

"It was the start of our first band," explains Dom wryly. "We'd go and do a band practice and I'd look round for Matt and find him in tears in a drama group somewhere. 'Get a grip – let's go and rock.'"

"All the people who were really popular at school are mechanics now," says Chris quietly.

"I used to hang around with the well-hards," admits Matt, wrecking any image of sensitive alienation. "We used to go down town and get fucking pissed up and get in fights... and I'd watch. I was a good defender in football. The first year of school I made everyone laugh but my comedic abilities disappeared by the third year. Then I started hanging round with girls."

It was Dom who belonged to the group of "guys with long hair who liked guitar music".

Matt makes a confession: "When I first joined your band I was wearing Umbro tracksuits."

Dom: "Shell suits and a flat-top..."

Yet just as you start thinking Muse are no strangers to popularity, odd figureheads for the disenfranchised, Matt lets his smile slip.

"We made the choice not to go to university

he explains. "It made us go into us three a little more, make music that was pleasing to each other. To the point we could play to one person who didn't give a shit and still have a really good time. It made us not care what anyone else thought. But maybe the way we deal with that is making music that's saying, 'Fuckkk offf'."

He says this with such Linda Blair-like intensity, a low and furious snarl, that it's actually quite alarming.

After all, they're only 23 – and the scars of their hometown troubles still run deep. You only have to look at all the scally/mosher nonsense happening in Manchester to see this is an ongoing, generational thing – basically, having weird hair still causes trouble.

"When we go back to Teignmouth everyone hates us because they think we slag it off. They say it's beautiful; lovely beaches, people leave their doors open... but for 15-year-old kids it's just drugs and fights.

"The cash machine was opposite the arcade," Matt explains, "and all the hard nuts would hang around by the gambling machines. Every time we went to get some money out, it was a war zone. You'd think no-one had seen us and then someone would go '(Grunts) You just call me waaanker?' and you'd go, 'What?'. And then two guys would run over and beat Dom up. It was horrendous."

"These weren't people from school," explains Chris. "These were older men who hang out with 14-year-old girls."

"They drive yellow Capris with dice in the front and deal drugs to children, basically," continues Matt. "There's only ever about four or five of them at any one time because they always end up in prison or dead." He looks pensive: "I do secretly get the urge to go back and..."

Chris smiles: "Pull out a couple of grand?"

Matt pauses for a second: "Pull out a gun."

Sitting on a tourbus with suitably deviant lilac leather seats, Matt's talking about violence again. He's thrumming with energy, replacing yesterday's air piano with twanging the elasticated bracelets round his wrists.

"I've had some severe incidents of road rage recently," he says. "It's always these old guys, 60 or something. I'm sure I've done nothing that wrong. There's one time I parked up on the kerb illegally so I could use a cash machine and this car deliberately rubbed up against my car to prove a point. I was like, 'FUCK OFF'."

He says this with the same alarmingly intense snarl as we heard yesterday.

"And because he saw me say that, this old guy got out with a crowbar and started cracking the lights. It was my mum's car as well. I just sat in the car laughing at him because I couldn't believe how tragic it was. I had a video camera with me and I was filming him doing it and he started shaking with embarrassment knowing everything he'd done had been captured. I've still got that video somewhere. A policeman wouldn't do that, would they? But policemen, teachers, bouncers, fucking security guards... I feel that they don't trust or like me automatically, and I haven't even done anything. I just walk into a room and I feel like a target.

"I used to get thrown out of clubs all the time," he remembers. "Once somebody picked me up by the neck and literally threw me out of the door."

What were you doing?

"I was dancing a bit weirdly and I think it looked like I was taking the piss."

Do you go out of your way to provoke people?

"Not really, because it means I get beaten up and I'm not very big. Although, I've never been badly beaten up – just thrown around a bit."

Do you think that your feud with Stereophonics followed a similar pattern? They were the bouncers, you were the ones dancing weirdly...

"It did have a smell of the same thing. Maybe they know – not them necessarily, but people like that, who hate what I do – that I could not give a shit and that I am having the best time of my life. It happened again the other day. I was walking into the Astoria and some guy tried to start a fight with me, calling me 'fucking wanker, pompous twat', the usual sort of stuff. The only time I would let it get to me is if he hit me. Otherwise I just laugh."

It's a fairly well-trodden lexicon of madness Muse tread – the histrionics of 'Micro Cuts' or 'Screenager', the sense of a chill future, the references to blood and loneliness. What do you think you bring to those conventions?

"I'm not completely self-absorbed," he smiles. "What I know of this world is what my senses have told me so in a way exploring the world is exploring your own self. In the process of looking for a soul, if there is such a thing, in the process of going there you hit a certain Jacob's Ladder-type madness where you face your own worse fears and dreams. I think it's on the edge of madness. I can feel it sometimes when I'm on stage, moments of insanity, a complete sort of 'I don't now what's happening', an utter lostness. Like ventriloquism, or *Being John Malkovich*."

For all the trappings of rock stardom and sophistication that surround Muse on the road – Matt's specially-made Japanese-style silk top, the attractive young women, the nightclubs that stay open just for them – it's not hard to see an underlying nerdiness poking through the self-confidence, Matt's intensity occasionally tripping him up.

"I don't want to say the next stuff, it just sounds laughable," giggles Matt. "If you print this people will think I'm a mental person. I try to express a lot about how I feel about the evolution of us as people. Hopes and fears about the future. The possible direction we're all going in.

"The name of the album, 'Origin Of Symmetry', is from a book about the geometry of the universe and how it's all in beautiful balance, a perfect thing in ten dimensions. It explains all the mysterious forces we invented religions around."

He unleashes an analogy of how mankind is like a worm crawling across a piece of paper. He talks of mysterious catacombs in southern Iraq and mysterious tablets predating language. He also has the good grace to laugh

"ALL THE POPULAR PEOPLE FROM OUR SCHOOL ARE NOW MECHANICS!"
CHRIS WOLSTENHOLME

"When I was out in Boston recently, the Pentagon got bombed," he explains. "There was a person out there who had a friend who used to be a pilot and he was worried his friend was dead. In the heat of the moment he started taking about all this stuff and nodded us in the direction of a few websites and books.

"It all sounds a bit unbelievable but there's definitely something there. They found these tablets that are in a computer language, full of star charts. There's an 11th planet which is actually geothermal and there's life on it and when it comes within reach of our planet they come over. They deliberately cloned us to one fifth of their intelligence and we only use a fifth of

He shrugs and laughs: "I entertain that sort of possibility a lot. I don't necessarily believe any of them. But it's important people should know."

Like a ludicrous and labyrinthine conspiracy theory, a Muse show is an impressively convoluted, massively entertaining event. As Chris tries to bayonet the front rows with his bass and Dom lets the drumkit remove all his inhibitions, Matt channels an unearthly falsetto and leaps upon his piano and throws red 'petals' from the sleeves of his geisha blouse. The songs, all of them, from the earliest singles to the even more extreme moments of 'Origin...' sound absolutely ludicrous and maginificent

band of recent times – or very few ever, indeed – going to these kind of levels.

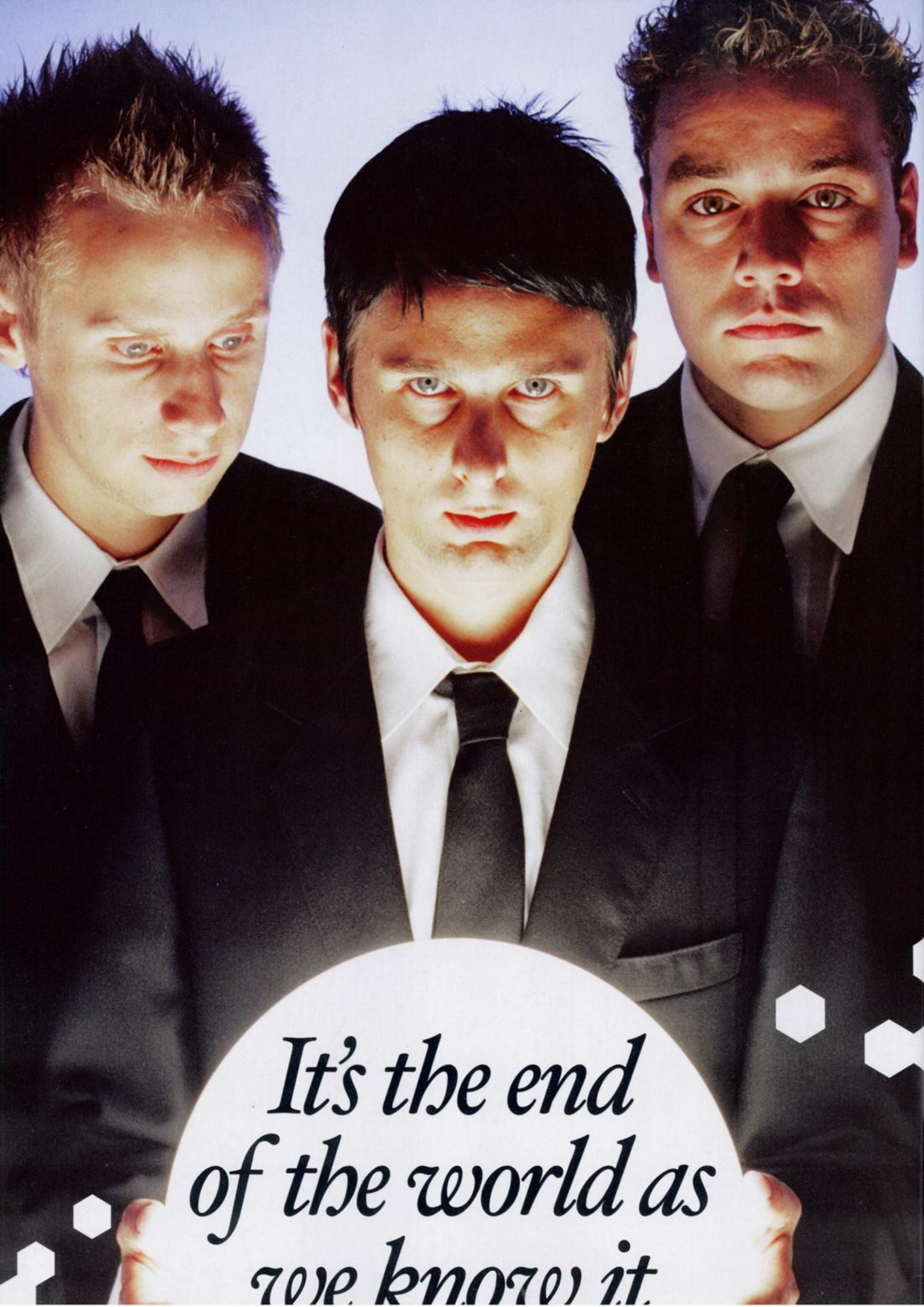
At the end of the show, after the lights come up, Dom and Chris sweetly run onstage and spray the audience with champagne. Are Muse the band to give a voice to those who are too sensitive to contemplate nun-killings but too tough to accept the status quo? Or just three young men with a vast talent for the grand gesture having the time of their lives?

Matt should probably have the last word.

"I think beliefs are just when you conclude on the knowledge you've obtained so far and the trouble is once you've made that conclusion you block yourself to new things," he said earlier. "So I think it's generally good

Photographer Roger Sargent: "This was one of the more peculiar commisions I've had. The premise was that competion winners could go paintballing with Muse in a secret location in London. The reality was running around the most godawful stinking cavern in east London, snapping Muse shooting their fans in the bollocks. Brilliant!"

№3
SCOTT
SCOTT


It's the end
of the world as
we know it

...and Matt feels fine, as Muse prepare to go supernova with their galaxy-sized third record. If the secret 12th planet doesn't cause Armageddon first, that is

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2003

TEXT: MARK BEAUMONT
PHOTOGRAPHY: PEROU

Listen carefully, we don't have much time. *NME* and Muse, alongside a dozen random schoolchildren and confused looking Japanese tourists, have been hand-picked to save Earth from an oncoming meteorite the size of Brazil. Our top scientists say there's a fifty-fifty chance it'll be dragged into Jupiter's orbit and destroyed before it hits us, but if they're wrong we're talking about an 80 per cent extinction event, the end of days, nobody left but the eskimos. There's a nuclear warhead on its way to blast the motherfucker to pebbles, but we're the back-up crew, trailing this rock through the galaxy packing more Scuds than a US 'liberation' force. We're on a full-throttle collision course with armageddon, baby, and we don't even have Bruce Willis' mobile.

THUDA-THUDA-THUDA-THUD! We burst into the meteor's vapour trail, our craft jolting like a bus over massive speed bumps. WHOOOSH! We bypass Jupiter, the comet now heading straight for Birmingham. KABOOM! We blast the rock into pieces, the impact rocking our ship like a knackered bumper car. HURRAH! We've saved the Earth from certain annihilation!

Matt Bellamy is disappointed.

"It would've been better if you'd actually witnessed the world blowing up from a spaceship," he says, trudging off the simulator ride in Kensington's Science Museum feeling slightly bruised and extremely cheated. "That must be a weird feeling. Imagine being in a spaceship trying to save the Earth and then it all goes wrong and you see the mistake you've made."

See, Matt Bellamy knows The Truth. He knows that global warming, international terrorism, religious fundamentalism, minute shifts in the Earth's axis, swingers parties, *Pop Idol* and all other Biblical-scale disasters known to man are caused by the twelfth planet nearing Earth again for the first time since 1200BC.

"It's on an elliptical orbit but it's massive," he says, "so we only see it for a few hundred years. It takes 3200 years to go around the Sun and it travels at the speed of a comet. It's actually a geothermal planet with these beings living on it which came down to Earth and genetically mixed their DNA with the DNA of apes to create us. That's why we have this conflict between higher thought and animal instinct, because we're a mixture of gone so fast so quickly, way above and beyond our physical capabilities."

Amazing. Where did you find out about it?

"There's a book called 'The Twelfth Planet' by Zecharia Sitchin. It's a very boring book though. I only read a couple of chapters and made up the rest. HURGH-HURGH-HURGH-HURGH! I'm a bit like that. I get books that suggest an amazing idea and I make up the rest and believe it. Where it gets a little bit interesting is this guy Sitchin was the main advisor to Colin Powell for about twenty years. Basically all of the main sites where all the tablets are with these writings on by these beings is Iraq. That's where it starts getting complicated."

Maybe that was what they were after, not the oil.

"Probably both. But whoever's got those tablets has basically got the truth of our existence. It's a bit Indiana Jones but I prefer enjoying things that are a bit more exciting than maybe the truth. It's a bit dull, isn't it, the truth? I think it's possible that the truth is actually unbelievable."

The Truth? Man, Matt Bellamy's truth is *out there*.

"It's time we saw a miracle/It's time for something Biblical...'Cause this is the end of the world!" - 'Apocalypse Please'

"YOU MUST GO EITHER NORTH OR EAST!" barks the policeman by the emergency tape, clearing coachloads of tourists and family outings away from a suspect package in a car on Exhibition Road.

"Okay," says Matt Bellamy, skirting around the police tape and wandering casually into the blast zone. For beyond the deserted no-man's-land of near certain death lies The Pub.

"You've got to have a bit of danger in your life," he giggles, "haven't you?"

If Matt Bellamy wasn't in the greatest British rock band of this generation he'd be down Oxford Street with a megaphone, warning the world that The End Is Nigh. Instead, he's written an album about it – from the cover shot of a forsaken soul watching the chosen ones flying off to Heaven to songs called 'Apocalypse Please', 'Sing For Absolution', 'Time Is Running Out', 'Hysteria' and 'Thoughts Of A Dying Atheist', 'Absolution' ("It's absolution from the human experience and everything it entails") is one big death knell for humanity. Come in third planet, your time is up. BONG.

"Human nature," Matt shrugs, "what can you do? Our evolution has brought us to this point where we're absorbing and destroying all the natural resources. It seems like the only thing we can do is get away from the planet and destroy another one. Within the next hundred years we'll make the

> "'ABSOLUTION' MEANS ABSOLUTION FROM THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE"
> MATT BELLAMY

Reaching out for the big time: time for Dom, Matt and Chris to get serious

extremities between rich and poor even more and civil unrest will increase and within four hundred years we could be approaching another ice age. So just fucking have a laugh! Go berserk while you've got the chance! HURGH-HURGH-HURGH!"

And 'go berserk' is certainly Muse's response to our onrushing doom. Even after recording sessions for their platinum-selling second album 'Origin Of Symmetry' involved necking a ton of magic mushrooms, getting naked in a hot tub and eating maggots, the accompanying year-long tour (complete with a tour manager dressed as a circus ringmaster and enormous inflatable bouncing testicles from the heavens) made the last days of Sodom look like a night out with Good Charlotte.

"There was a lot of nakedness on the bus," Matt remembers. "I remember seeing Dom's bum running down the corridor a lot and our tour manager with a couple of women on his face. But when you're doing that kind of thing it never feels like what you thought it would."

He considers for a second.

"No, it did actually. It was brilliant. HURGH-HURGH-HUUUUURGH! I think we realised we are normal people and normal people go for it when they're on tour because that's what it's all about. I had a relationship for six years from the age of 16 to 22, so I always had that stability. But when that stability stopped and I split up right in the middle of the 'Origin Of Symmetry' touring period that I thought to myself 'actually, this is much better! Being unstable is much better!' Before, touring was a bit of a jading experience, but when I was free it was the opposite because I'd never really experienced anything outside of the life that we had down in Devon, a small-town life. Then I found myself in a really good relationship with someone who's way more exciting than anyone I'd ever met before and way more exciting than anyone I thought I could've met. So in some ways I've almost got it all now. I'm with someone that's cool, not restrictive."

After a drenched but triumphant finale at Reading 2002, the last massive inflatable testicle was burst, the ringmaster was sold off to The Thrills for half a banana and Muse retired back to Devon for their first real break in three years and some Big Thinking. Bassist Chris Wolstenholme began frantic work on his third child - being induced this very afternoon - presumably hoping to save the human race by becoming the new Adam and Eve ("He wants to have five," says Matt). Drummer Dom Howard repented of his arse-baring days and found himself a ladyfriend to go supermarket shopping with "to ground myself". And Matt, you imagine, covered his windows in silverfoil, learnt to speak Zarthagian and watched the world going to hell in a handbucket on the news.

"There were moments when the war kicked in when everyone was watching TV for those first few days," he remembers, "and it was a pretty dark atmosphere in the world. It was a bit of a weird vibe. I think that inspired a bit of doubt in the album as well, but it's also one of the things that forced the album to need to be more, y'knowworrimean. Some songs became more important than others, like 'Apocalypse Please'. That song sets the stage for the whole album. Religion fanaticism and religious stupidity is gonna cause everything to fuck up and the whole album is about what goes through your mind at the last moment. Are you pissed off and jaded or are you happy you've done everything you could've done."

> "JESUS GOT TAKEN DOWN. HE WAS RESUSCITATED, NOT RESSURECTED"
> MATT BELLAMY

In fact, having heard and heeded the end-of-the-world proclamations of 'Apocalypse Please' and believing Matt Bellamy to be the new Nostradamus, *NME* is off to live in a cave in Tibet. Who's coming?

"HURGH-HURGH-HURRRRGHHH!" Matt guffaws. "Actually, the message of that song is that religious inaccuracies lead to the re-enactment of ancient prophesies. That's what's going on now. That nobhead in America, y'knowworrimean? And Islam, whatever. Between them all they're believing in some ancient prophesy and all that was was a couple of people in robes improvising. Stories that are gonna help society evolve. The fact that the modern day is still influenced by these ideas is outrageous. I'm singing from the point of view of a religious fanatic saying 'c'mon God, come down to Earth and sort it all out'."

And you might want to stop reading now, Evanescence. Matt doesn't hold too closely to traditional readings of the scriptures.

"Jesus wasn't a Jew or anything," he motormouths emphatically. "I saw this programme the other night and I read a bit about it, it's a recent discovery. People have known about it for years but the Spanish Inquisition kept it down. Basically, Jesus didn't die on the cross. He got taken down. He was taken down and he was *resuscitated*, not resurrected. It comes from the same Hebrew word, resuscitation and resurrection."

You realise you've just rubbished 2000 years of Christianity? We'll get letters.

"It's important these guys know this stuff," Matt continues, "because Judaism says that the Messiah will come down to Earth and sort it all out. But he didn't sort it all out, did he? He came down and multiplied some fish and did this, that and the other and died. He hadn't sorted it all out, so he was obviously not the Messiah. My point is he was a great bloke and the real story is much more interesting than some weird fantasy. Because the real story is that the most

religion in the western world is influenced by Eastern ways of thinking. The things that I'm saying now, in the years 900, 1600, people who said that, they got quartered and they got burnt at the stake. Now we live in a time when you can say stuff and I think people need to say it. If I was saying what I'm saying now in America then I think I would get quartered in a way."

You didn't just watch ten minutes of that programme and make the rest up, did you?

"No, no. I'm not against religion. I'm a little bit anti-Christian but I'm not anti-Judaism, I'm not anti-religious thought at all. Islam believes in Mohammed, Christians believe in Christ, Rastafarians believe in rastafari, whatever. Everyone's got their own interpretations. As far as I can see the people that are causing problems are the people who think he's already been and gone. I think he hasn't come yet."

He pauses for a second. A fleeting concern that he might be offending someone.

"Or she."

Naturally, considering its theme, Dom played the opening drum part of 'Apocalypse Please' hitting floating drums from a lilo in a swimming pool. Wearing a nappy.

"It was," he claims, "to find the right vibe for the song."

Visionary, dreamer or madman, Matt Bellamy is certainly that rare beast in the wilds of rock, the Thinker. Often dismissed as a Stephen Hawking-meets-Screaming Lord Sutch crackpot - the wild philosophies on aliens, religion and astronomy; the hallucinations of razor spikes in his head; the claims that he can't remember anything about his life before the age of 20 and 'downloads' his personality from people he meets; the desire to own a jet-pack and live under the sea; the voice like Maria Callas on crack - he's actually something of a cosmic intellectual with a sponge for a brain and an imagination the size of the twelfth planet. So it's no wonder that the album he started writing about mundane home matters ('Showbiz' was "a bit of teenage angst", 'Origin Of Symmetry' was about "going on tour all the time and losing connection with our family and friends so we don't really know anyone apart from ourselves and even ourselves we didn't know anymore" and 'Absolution' is "more about us being personable, about us being normal people at home") took a sharp turn for the apocalyptic in the band's London rehearsal room once world events went mushroom cloud-shaped.

"There's a few ways of looking at it," he says. "It could be about my relationship ending, it could be about the fact that there was war breaking out, it could be about the fact that

What Was Happening

- Radiohead headline Glastonbury
- Bush admits Saddam had no link to 9/11
- Arnold Schwarzenegger voted Governor of California
- Black Eyed Peas 'Where Is The Love?' Number One

fact that in four hundred years there's gonna be an ice age. I think within our lifetime we're gonna see some dark stuff. We're gonna see some stuff that makes us view humanity in not such a good way. It's already happened but it's gonna happen even more. But the reaction isn't all negative. One of my favourite songs is 'Butterflies And Hurricanes' because it's accepting that things are all over but it's going 'fuckin' go for it!', d'yaknowworimean? There's a few tracks that are trying to find that strength, the raw energy that keeps you going through that jadedness as opposed to just resigning."

> "SOMETIMES WE'RE LIKE, 'WHAT THE FUCK ARE WE DOING!?'"
> MATT BELLAMY

Indeed, every pore of 'Absolution' screams defiance in the face of destruction, sends humanity out on an almighty bang, not a whimper. Reigning in 'Origin Of Symmetry"s Flaming Soprano histrionics while playing their instruments like they're Earth-obliterating asteroids and wailing tunes that could bend universes, Muse have here achieved a whole new stratosphere of rock: Lunar Opera or Thunder Metal. Album Of The Year by a hundred light years, it turns up the rock to warp eleven on the likes of 'Time Is Running Out' and 'TSP', yearns like a poisoned Romeo on 'Sing For Absolution' and makes steel cry on the sumptuous, breathy 'Blackout'. It also reads like a collection of Grimm fairy tales rewritten by Brett Easton Ellis for the technological age: 'Stockholm Syndrome' concerns a medical complaint whereby someone falls in love with the person that has kidnapped them ("In 1973 some bank robbers went to rob a bank and ended up taking six people hostage and it went on TV," Dom explains. "But the hostages ended up defending the captives in court and one of the hostages got married to one of the captors") while 'Thoughts Of A Dying Atheist' sounds like it's the story of being the only gay guy in Jet.

"It's actually the idea of a guy who's come back from the office and he's killed everybody in the office," says Matt, feverishly. "He's ripped them all apart with his bare hands. The mindset of the song is that someone has done that and gone home to their wife with blood on their hands. It's not the ending of his life, it's the ending of his sanity."

With such dark thoughts plaguing his every waking moment and such catastrophic world events informing his worldview during the recording of 'Absolution', the cracks began to widen. Matt started having regular

and beaten on the feet ("I'd wake up with my feet clenched") and he started experiencing violent moodswings in the studio.

"The album goes from being the most amazing music I've ever heard in my life to the most laughable piece of shit I've ever heard within the space of a couple of minutes," he laughs. "I was moving between the extremes of doubt and absolute ridiculous confidence. There are moments when you, the rest of the band, the producer and the assistant producer all look at each other and think 'what the fuck are we doing? We've completely lost the plot'.

That happened a fair few times actually. 'Time Is Running Out' went from being a pile of cack to the grooviest, coolest song on the record. But then you contrast that with the moments you really feel like you're doing something important. But those doubting moments are really quite stark, it's a really hollow feeling, but they're usually followed by the opposite."

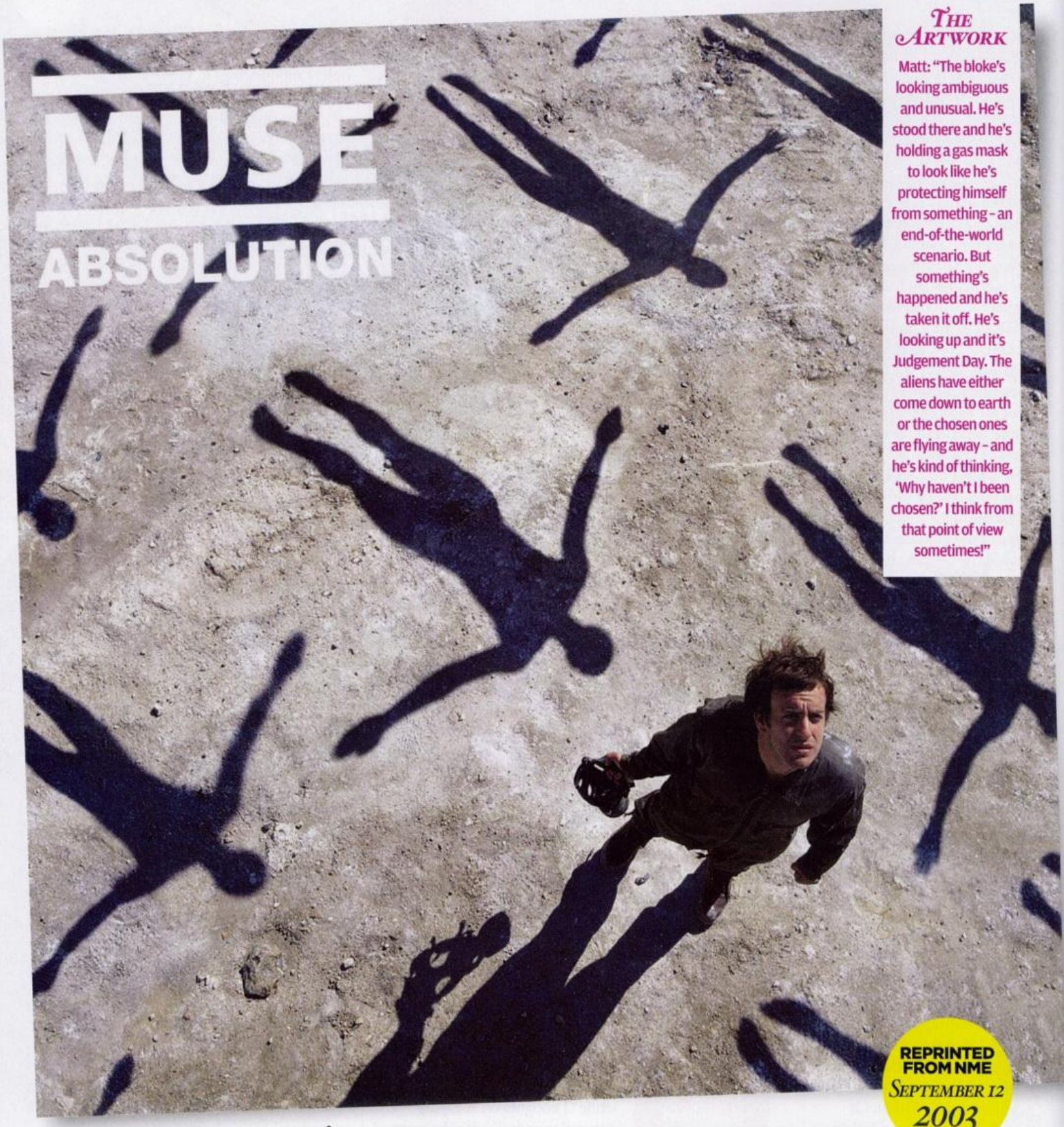
'Absolution' is a momentous record because it has so little to do with 2003. Epic when the zeitgeist reads 'tinny', enormous when Toe Rag is fully booked until 2005, forward-thinking when the AC/DC rack of HMV is empty, serious when The Darkness are up for the Mercury Music Prize, it's unique for its very grandiosity and huge but fully achieved ambition. But by sounding so gigantic so young, does that make you dinosaurs before your time?

"No," Matt argues, "we're the opposite of that. We have the possibility of changing everything. It's not just making music it's showing people what music is all about. I think we could do anything and get away with it. We could come out with a Coldplay type of track or we could come out with an experimental electronica album or a retro rock punk album. Personally I've never heard anything we can't do. We may not be good enough to be innovative but that's the frame of mind you need to be in to make a start."

And what of the future?

"We're playing Wembley."

No, we mean *the future*. Will the robots rise up and destroy their human creators? Matt ponders for a moment like a challenged professor. "There's been enough films to suggest this sort of thing might happen. Surely we can stop it. If the robots did take over it'd be with the assistance of terrorists, for sure. Have you heard of the latest form of the internet? It's where you don't just swap data you can swap power. You can connect yourself to a computer in Australia and take power from there. So it'll just be one big brain."



THE ARTWORK

Matt: "The bloke's looking ambiguous and unusual. He's stood there and he's holding a gas mask to look like he's protecting himself from something – an end-of-the-world scenario. But something's happened and he's taken it off. He's looking up and it's Judgement Day. The aliens have either come down to earth or the chosen ones are flying away – and he's kind of thinking, 'Why haven't I been chosen?' I think from that point of view sometimes!"

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2003

The Breakthrough Record

ABSOLUTION

Thrusters truly engaged, Muse's confident third step sees them rocket off into a bright new world of vivacious pop metal

In our green, moneyed corner of Planet Earth, possibility is being pissed up the wall. For the vast majority of human beings, at the age of about 21, the sparkle in the eyes deadens just a little and they become a citizen rather than a soul. As the prophet Ally Sheedy foretold in *The Breakfast Club*, "When you get old, your heart dies."

Yet for a sacred few, that disengagement from the simple and the obvious is never quite total. Their eyes will always be that little bit wider than everybody else, and these are the people with the equipment that might lead them one day to genius. For Muse lynchpin Matt Bellamy, those years banging his head against a brick wall are over. He's broken through, found a better place on the other side, and he wants us all to come with him. Just minutes into 'Absolution' we get his ultimate commandment to this lazy world, on thunderous opener 'Apocalypse Please'. "*It's time*," he says, "*we saw a miracle*".

Muse's third album is packed full of them. The trappings of showbiz, muscle museums and plug-in babies have all been cleared away – swept under the carpet as childish things. Free of fripperies like detail, reference or circumstance, Bellamy has put together a collection of simple, poetic, transparent songs that re-engage with the old words and values; honour, courage and righteousness. It's one long love letter to the Impossible Dream, and WILL NOT SURRENDER. There's been no record released yet this century with stakes so high. Musically, it could have been a disaster. But one man's prog is another man's progress, and every guitar here sounds like it's from the future, every flourish and movement scored and orchestrated with the celestial vision. By indulging every pomp rock wet dream he's ever had, Matt's found that there's no such thing as too much distortion, and that, when you care this much, chartbusting tunes really do fall from the sky.

It begins, of course, simply; a subtle, funeral dirge clambers in from the distance. Then 'Apocalypse Please' – all wailing vocal theatrics and operatic guitars – arrives and makes damn sure you know that the stakes have been raised. The single 'Time Is Running Out' briefly flies back to earth to pick up a few conventional rock tricks, ascending menacingly from scuzzy, brittle verse before crashing through the heart of the sun to unveil the album's pure motive on the delicate, hymnal 'Sing For Absolution'. But even this gives away further ground to the tingling rock-opera of 'Stockholm Syndrome'. Only on 'Falling Away With You' does Bellamy come close to anything as selfish as a love song, and even then, its intimacy is factored out to encompass the entire universe, Bellamy crooning, "*forget the reckless things we've done, our lives have just begun*" as much to the rest of this lost world as to any sweetheart.

Most crucially, this mammoth construction of sound never veers from its co-ordinates, never descends into either shoddy poetry or guitar masturbation. And the standard of instant, memorable tunes never drops. From here, a brief, dreamy 'Interlude' allows time to power up before 'Hysteria' cranks up the guitar for full-on chartbound power grunge. Things reach critical mass with album centrepiece 'Butterflies And Hurricanes'. As a frantic electronic niggle slowly builds around squelching guitars, the incantation grows bigger, until a fuzz of distortion opens up to the sound of grand chamber pianos falling down spiral stairs, gospel backing vocals all adding up to the most powerful song the world has ever seen. It's certainly the biggest commandment of the record, and also the simplest: "*You've got to change the world and use this chance to be heard*". You can see the tears as Bellamy desperately tries to make us feel

A record of this much scope and scale can only reach chaos, and so the only chink comes through on 'TSP' and 'Endlessly', which, for all their metallic splendour, could have been on 'Origin Of Symmetry'. This is hardly an insult, especially considering the final two tracks, 'Thoughts Of A Dying Atheist' and 'Ruled By Secrecy', represent one free-flowing fug of wonder. But by then, the work is done. On earth, Muse have made the UK Rock record of the year, but as it is in heaven, they've created a scripture; the defining document of a new religion no more complicated than Bellamy's crystal clear lyrics; there is no afterlife, you have to create your happy ending here on earth. Sing for absolution, for sure, but it won't be a God that absolves you come judgement day, it'll be the only deity that's all-powerful – the heroic, miraculous force of collective humanity, doing things before they die.

Muse have widened the goalposts and re-established what rock is allowed to stand for. Next to 'Absolution', most albums sound so painfully small. Which, of course, means that there'll already be an army of dead-eyes queuing up to destroy it. But that's its beauty. Like 'Ulysses' or 'The Matrix Reloaded', 'Absolution' makes as much sense as you decide it's going to. But if you undo some buttons, dare to dream and allow this astonishing record total control, you might

The Details

Intro ★★★
Apocalypse Please ★★★★
Time Is Running Out ★★★★★
Sing For Absolution ★★★★
Stockholm Syndrome ★★★★
Falling Away With You ★★★★
Interlude ★★
Hysteria ★★★★★
Blackout ★★★★
Butterflies & Hurricanes ★★★★
The Small Print ★★★★
Endlessly ★★★
Thoughts Of A Dying Atheist ★★★★
Ruled By Secrecy ★★★

Released: Sept 21 2003
Recorded: Grouse Lodge, Ireland; Air Studios, London; Cello Studios, LA; Livingstone Studios, London; Sawmills, Cornwall
Producer: Rich Costey, John Cornfield, Paul Reeve, Muse
Chart Position: 1
Singles: Stockholm Syndrome, Time Is Running Out, Hysteria, Sing For Absolution, Apocalypse Please, Butterflies & Hurricanes

EAN CHALKLEY

The RISE An

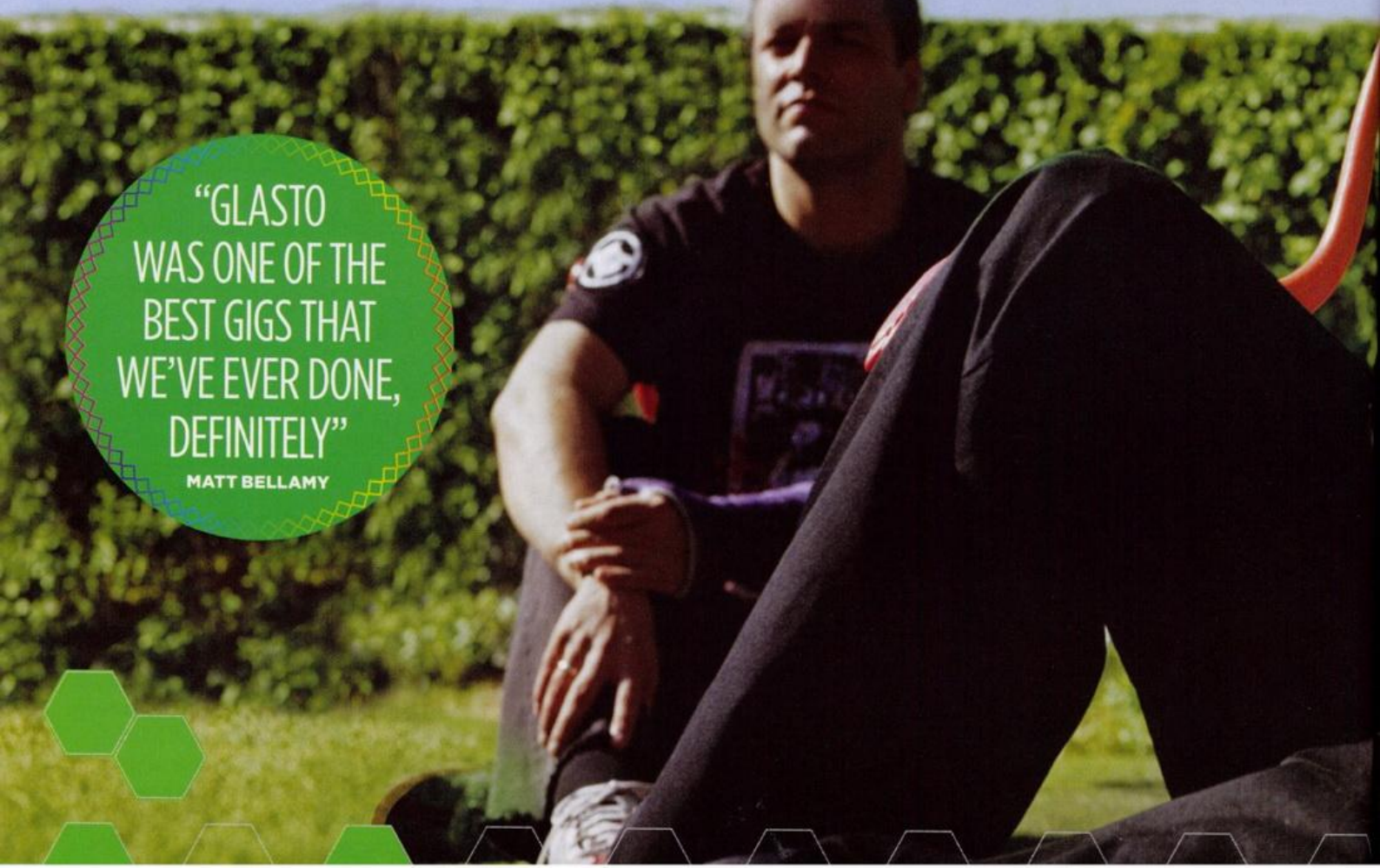
At the climax of their most triumphant-yet-tragic year, the band are now beginnin

REPRINTED FROM NME *DECEMBER 18* *2004*

TEXT: DAN MARTIN
PHOTOGRAPH: CONTOUR/GETTY

A year and a half ago, Muse released their third album 'Absolution'. The best thing they had ever done by about a thousand million light years, and one which fired heavy weapons at the glass ceiling about how much rock'n'roll was allowed to stand for. As a measure of what's changed since, consider that we're now able to stomach a MTV punk protest rock opera from *Green Day*, the snotty-nosed Camdenite who reckoned he was more talented than Dylan looks to be getting away with it, and the new Mars Volta album has one song on it that is 70-minutes long and will still be massive. We've come a long way in the last twelve months, and rock'n'roll has become an infinitely more delicious and ridiculous place for it. But in August 2003, we still had a fair way to catch up with Muse and their guitar techno suites ('Stockholm Syndrome') boulder metal ('Hysteria') and sci-fi love hymns ('Falling Away With You'). Sure, they went to number one in a bunch of countries, but the scale of their ambition was too much for the High Council For The Defining Of Zeitgeist to handle in the year of 'Elephant'. Muse were a band that required *stomach*, and Indie 2003 belonged to skinny white boys. A band known for amusing themselves by travelling round on jet packs and making percussion instruments out of leftovers from the abbatoir just weren't really... welcome.

They end the year as rock's ultimate champions, after stealing the summer's festivals, making 300,000 album's worth of inroads into America and being the only British band to receive the fast-track ticket to the big time that is winning an MTV Europe Award. Muse have reshaped the year in their own image and this week they cap it with what will be Britock's biggest spectacular in years. Two nights in Earl's Court and 36,000 lives to change. Final proof that after years of being our best live band, they're now our biggest. There's been plans to be the first to use a new-fangled, beyond surround-sound system that had to be nixed because it hadn't properly been invented yet. "There's problems with the design and stuff," says Matt. "We did have some set up time, but a combination of our sound guy and the PA company basically bottled out of it. We had this idea and they said yes initially but then they got nervous, like: 'To be honest, I'm not sure we could pull that off'!" Just like them to have ideas so big that even *science* can't keep up. But before we have any more ridiculous conversations about Muse, let's remember the journey they spent



FALL Of 2004

o drop hints of the awesome Cydonian thrills to come. Fasten your seatbelts tight!

getting here. Because this lift-off comes as a climax to one of the most hair-raising rock stories of the year, and at times it's been all-too-bruisingly real.

You could almost see the cogs turning in people's heads on Sunday night at Glastonbury. Up until the second that the opening chimes of 'Hysteria' ripped open the sky, a lot of otherwise intelligent people scoffed at their booking as a headline act. They might have been a stadium level band by that point, but they and their fans were a self-sufficient organised that the media had pegged as moody teenagers with a Dungeons and Dragons Role Play fixation, and to the passing punter... well they weren't quite Oasis and Paul McCartney, were they now?

"We really like putting on bands at that level," says festival organiser Emily Eavis, "where we really feel that they'll be able to pull it off completely. People obviously were a bit... 'McCartney, Oasis, Muse!?! hmmmmmm', but it was like... 'You watch!' Especially those local radio stations. *You watch!*.' And it really blew people's minds." They stepped up to the table, pulverised it with a hammer and drove over the timber in a big tank, laughing. Matt, dressed as Jean Michel-Jarre, came into his own as a space-rock sorcerer, and the whole thing was so blindingly impressive that that immediately became a cool thing to be.

Muse being the UK's best live band ceased to be opinion and became scientific fact. NME reckoned "If there are songs more expansive than 'Plug-In Baby', 'Butterflies and Hurricanes' and the piano Nazi stampede of 'Apocalypse Please' then no earthly venue could house them – these are rock songs so gigantic and sensational that they could sing in the Pixies." Even The Times newspaper (The Times!) called it "the only truly classic performance of the weekend." Not many bands can raise their game to fill such a massive space. Muse were *built* for it.

"I think it was the best performance of last year," says Emily. "It completely blew people's minds, everyone in that audience was like.... *'what is THIS??!'* And so it was like probably the ultimate booking."

What Was Happening

- 40,000 dead in South-East Asian tsunami
- George W Bush wins second term in Presidential office
- Iraqi town of Fallujah falls to US forces
- Band Aid 20's 'Do They Know It's Christmas?' Number 1

Matt: "I think there was the sense of being underdogs doing it, but looking back on it now I think it's probably one of the best gigs we've ever done. It was definitely the biggest gig of our lives. I was unusually calm before we played. I was really just on the case with the music. I just felt everything that we were doing, I didn't really have any moments of doubts or anything like that. I just felt good!" Matt's plug-in baby had crucified his enemies.

It's pointless to try and make any sense out of what happened afterwards, when minutes after seeing his son play the show of his life. Dominic's father Bill Howard died suddenly on site. But what *did* strike a chord was the honour and bravery with which they handled themselves afterwards.

"We cancelled one show," says Dominic. "It was just something we'd talked about that I wanted to go out and play. I was down in Devon with my family at this tragic time, and it's difficult to know what to say, what to do with yourself, how you're gonna move forward. But the key point *is* to move forward and find some positivity somewhere, and my only way of doing that was doing what I enjoy doing and that's playing. I was unsure whether to do it. But my family and my friends, my close friends around at that time were advising me to go away and do it. And those first few gigs were difficult and very strange."

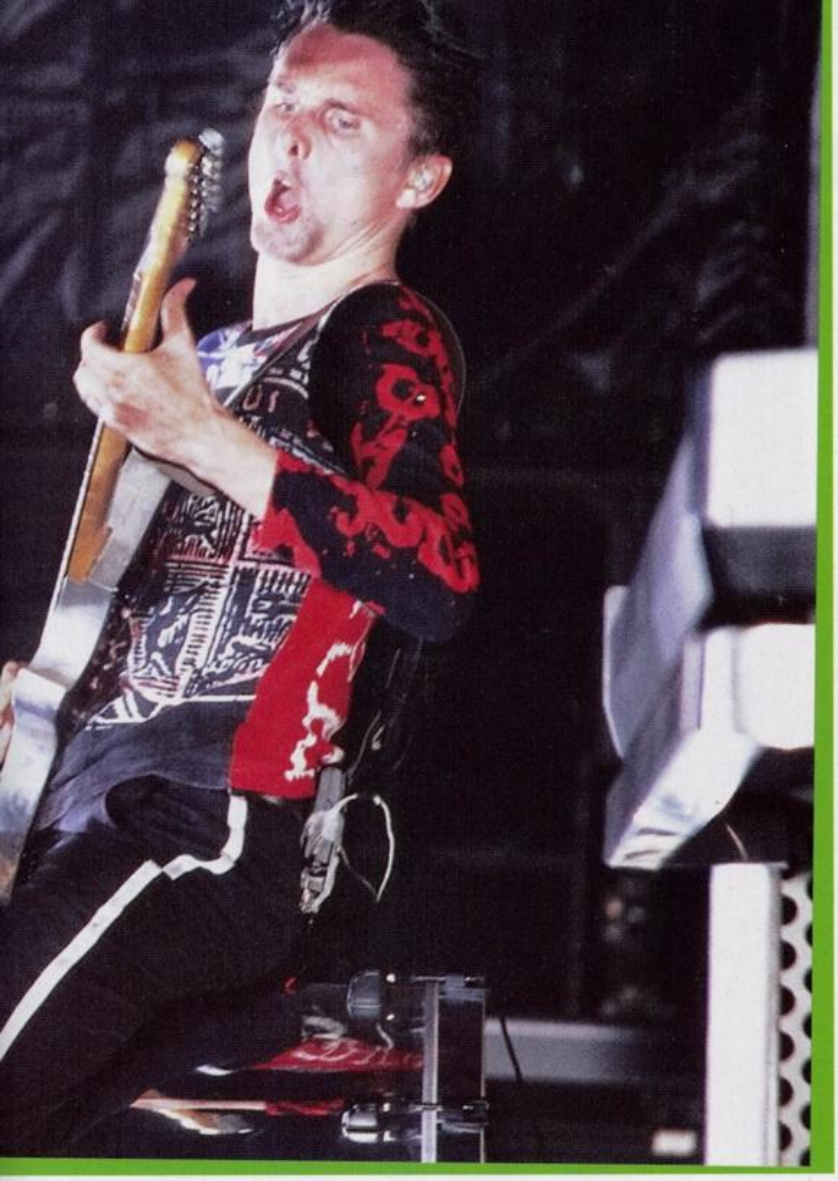
"It's the old cliché that you don't know what you've got 'til it's possibly gone," says Matt. "We went back to what it was like to be young again and appreciate the chance to be onstage and feel the basics. We took it right back to the real basics of why you want to be in a band."

Were it not enough to have endured such personal tragedy so publicly, they've also survived violent setbacks. On the day of their first American show in four years (a dispute with the US label had meant 'Origin Of Symmetry' had never got released over there), Matt tore open his face with his guitar strings. January's Big Day Out tour saw them survive the patronage of Lars Ulrich, and on summer's Cure-curated Curiosa tour, an aftershow footie match with The Cooper Temple Clause saw bass player Chris collide with Fisher and break his wrist. With four days to go until two headline slots at the V Festival, they managed to teach Streets bass player Morgan Nicholls the entire set and steal *that* festival as well.

> "THE NEW STUFF SOUNDS LIKE EPIC COUNTRY. LIKE A MAN RIDING A HORSE!"
> MATT BELLAMY

"I tell you what it is," says Matt, "I think when things like that happen to you, it can touch a band in two different ways. It can make you fall apart or it can make you go, this means everything to me, I'm not gonna let anything stop it. I think the fact that the two things that happened were so serious just made us all realise how important it actually is, the music that we make."

The last time a British band stood over this kind of abyss, with immortality surely theirs if only they dare to jump, they were called Radiohead. *They* got scared, even though 'Kid A' backfired on them and made them even *bigger*. But Muse re-instated in British rock the honour and adventure that plenty of us thought was gone forever. And what's *dangerous* is the thought of where they might go next. "Matthew's such a talented individual," says Korda Marshall, now the head of Warner UK and the man who signed them, "I think he could go in many different directions. He could make his 'Mingus' by Joni Mitchell, her jazzy one – he could easily go left and make a 'Kid A', or he could go and make 'Physical Graffiti' by Led Zeppelin. He's got the talent to do either. It's a wonderful position for him to be in, but he and all three of them have worked really really hard for seven years now." At which point we decide it will be fine to get ridiculous again as we tempt fate by second-guessing the new songs they might play. They're mindful of a jinx that when the



new songs live early on they always turn out badly, but they'll almost definitely play some anyway. So far, early sketches for album #4 include 'Church Of SubGenius' – after t he weirdo slacker cult, plus one song that definitely goes even further than 'Butterflies and Hurricanes'. "I'm not quite sure how we're going to record itz," splutters Matt. "It's a new category of epicness!" Then there's him telling everyone that their new songs will sound like The Strokes.

"Nah, the *new* new stuff sounds like.... Calexico! It sounds like... epic country. It sounds like a man riding a horse"

Dom: "...Playing the trumpet."

"Yeah, the track I'm most proud of at the moment, it does, it sounds like a man riding on a horse, playing a trumpet. In Mexico. And then being shot by bandits. There's a little bit of that coming through."

But really. The Strokes.

"It's, you know... 'melodic kind of vibes'. "We'd never say it sounds like The Strokes now in a million years. What we do sounds nothing like that and it never will to anyone, but it's a little bit like that. But there's a little bit of flamenco, Tex Mex guitar – that thing's always been there but we've never found a way to bring it out. The Tom Waits thing as well, there's a few things," Bellamy laughs.

Muse will doubtless have the last laugh. After all, there are forces at work here bigger and mightier than any of us. Bigger than even

Follwing on from the Glasto slot that made them officially A Big Deal, the chaps hit the road for some of their best shows ever, and also began their attempts to be the most stupendously over the top band of all time

COURTING THE BIGTIME

EARLS COURT ARENA

MONDAY, 20 DECEMBER

REPRINTED FROM NME JANUARY 22 2005

Confronted with the biggest gigs of their career thus far, Matt and co... well, you know what happens

You know what they say about the size of a band's stage show? It's inversely proportionate to the quality of their music. Lighting rig the size of China? Expect month-long drum solos. Guitarist shooting lasers from an eight-necked F1-11 supersonic turbo-axe? He's gonna widdle 'til Christmas. Singer riding a white tiger onstage? *Tiny* rock. Any amount of stadium flam or thermonuclear fireworks is there merely to distract attention from the fact that the band in question suck like an outbound tsunami. FACT.

Sure, Muse wheel out their usual mood-enhancers for their – count 'em, Mr Morrissey, sir – *second* night at the cavernous, 16,000-capacity gig Grand Canyon that is Earls Court: the floating space testicles filled with darting black alien-sperm, the ticker-tape cannons, the *Simon Says* light-up opera organ, the camera strapped to the front of Matt Bellamy's face for those visceral sweaty-front-row shots. But it's all mere froth and frill, arena-sized window-dressing around the meat of the matter: that the Muse story has become as epic and enthralling as their music always suggested. Since leaving a mile-wide blast-crater around Glastonbury's Pyramid Stage in June – and dealing so nobly with the tragedy which immediately followed, as well as numerous self-inflicted injuries throughout last year – they've shaken off the dismissive sneers of The Doubters who've long considered them some kind of comedy inter-planetary G4 and finally earned the respect worthy of the best British rock band of a generation.

The best, then, and now the biggest. All fears that Muse might use the most celebratory gigs of their career to showcase their rumoured batch of C&W flamenco mariachi surf Strokes tunes are stomped beneath the crashing piano jackboot of 'Apocalypse Please', obliterated by the light-sabre-through-sheet-metal onslaught of 'Hysteria' and blasted clean out of the airlock on the zero gravity swoons of 'Blackout'. Having bulged the walls of every arena in the Western Hemisphere, the 'Absolution' set – 'Time Is Running Out', 'Butterflies & Hurricanes', 'Plug-In Baby', 'Stockholm Syndrome', and a dozen other tunes that could single-handedly shock-and-awe a rebel republic back into line - finally finds a venue that fits; all that remains now is a fourth album to trim the stadium bluster (the odd aimless piano interlude; tonight's solitary drift-along new song 'DES') into a sleek, sadistic robo-rock killing machine. 2005 don't know what it's got coming... ***Mark Beaumont***

MATT EXPLAINS

THE SET

"I built a big keyboard thing with lights. Every time I hit a note a big light flashes – like some sort of spaceship piano. Like Close Encounters Of The Third Kind!"

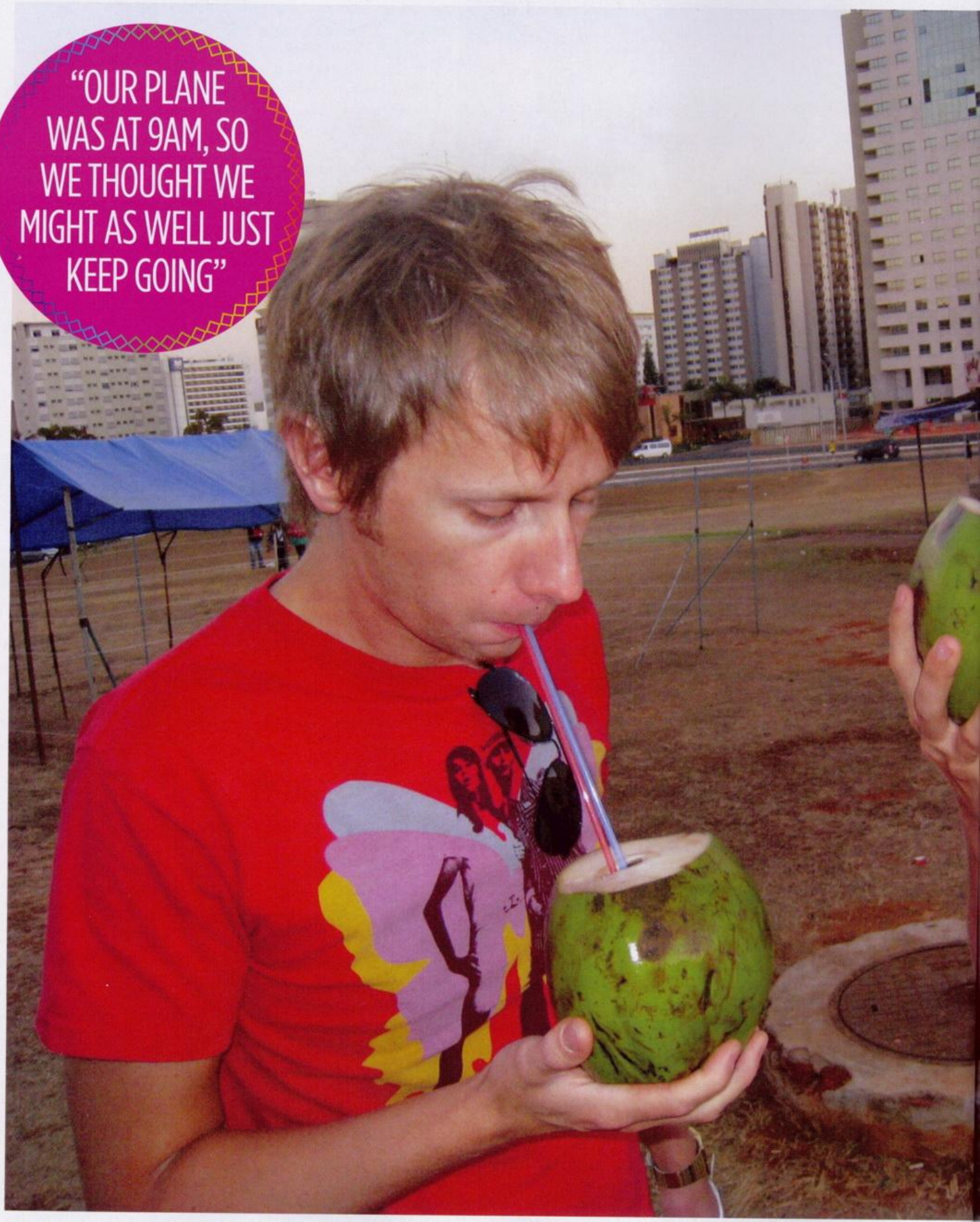
REPRINTED FROM NME
AUGUST 16
2008

TOUR PHOTO DIARY

GOOD EVENING, SAO PAULO!

*Matt Bellamy talks you through the photographs Muse's "loose mate" **Tom Kirk** took o*

"OUR PLANE WAS AT 9AM, SO WE THOUGHT WE MIGHT AS WELL JUST KEEP GOING"

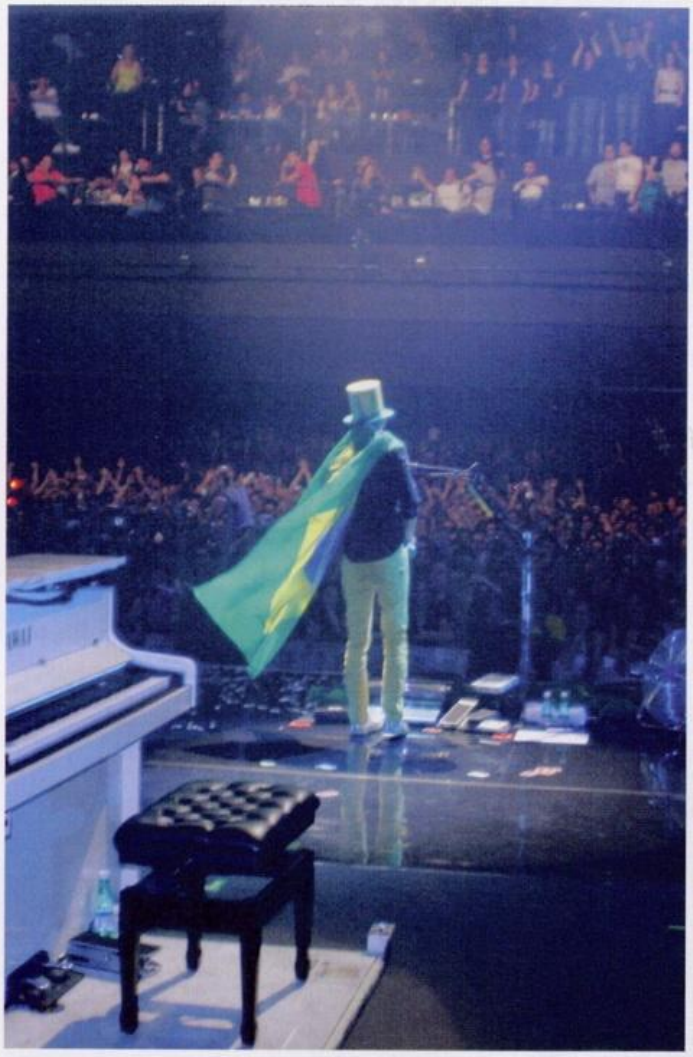


▲ "That's us having breakfast after we'd been up all night after playing a gig in Brasilia, Brazil. To get over the jetlag we decided to stay up all night. We went to a few bars, then we realised our hotel was just across the road from this food market. That photo's about 6.30 in the morning. We're really starting to lag at that point, although our plane was at 9am, so we thought we might as well just keep going!"

their tour of South America. Fun times!

◀ "That's some more breakfast stuff there. That's just before we had those coconuts in the first picture. The market was run by mainly African people who specialise in African food. There's actually a picture of the symbol because it goes right back to when the Africans first came to Portugal this is their symbol. There's a lot of people playing music around there and serving up homemade food."

▲ "We started doing a few requests over in Brazil. The fans over there are handy communicators for trying to make you do things onstage. One sign says 'Fans Run The Show' – and that's true. I think we've sold about ten records there, but most of the venues we're playing were, like, for 10,000 and sold-out. It's all just because of a few of the websites that the fans run – if it wasn't for the internet we wouldn't



▲ "Rio was a weird gig. There was this squirm of people crammed in almost, like, illegally down the bottom whereas at the top on the balcony there's all these rich people with tables having an evening meal – it was like there was two completely different gigs taking place at the same time. And there's Dom. Throughout the tour we kept getting thrown stuff onstage like hats and Dom put on this top hat – it matches his trousers and the flags."

▲ "I think this was in Bogotá, Columbia. There was this speed thing going on. Unless it's just some kind of joke. I don't know, but it was definitely on there – it was stuck to the bar! Things were very cheap. Beer was about a dollar!"

▶ "This one's mid-way through – we've just got the plane there. It was actually a private jet; we don't make a habit of getting them. We were told you were looking for a cover shot, and all the shots are natural except that one which is posed. I think that was the morning that our loose photographer mate had to try and get a cover shot for the NME – this was the best we could come up with! We're just doing a bit of hanging around an airport here, so there's not much interesting going on!"

"WE GOT A PRIVATE JET ONCE, BUT IT'S NOT SOMETHING WE MAKE A HABIT OF!"

▶ "I've been forcing Dom and Chris to do a cheesy '80s drum solo just so that I can have a break. So half way through the gig I come off to the side of the stage and have a little drink on the side. Secretly – embarrassingly for them – I like watching them struggle. Forcing them to do a solo

▶ "We only did one signing session in South America which was this one in Chile. It was pandemonium. That's how many people that couldn't get in – that were just outside. The record shop coaxed us to go and wave. We felt embarrassed to go and do that, but Dom pulled it off. Getting in and out we didn't manage to get any shots, but it was quite a Beatles moment really. It's moving getting treated that way when you've never been somewhere before."

▲ "In South America they've got one thing very particular that's totally different to anywhere else, which is bizarre but really quite stunning: they sing anything, all the guitar solos and guitar melodies louder than anything else. They don't really sing words very much. They sing the guitar stuff *really* loud. Even really fast things like the bassline from 'Hysteria' or the melody from 'Knights Of Cydonia' – it turns into a football crowd."

◀ "We got a lot of drawings and pictures. That one's a drawing of me with red hair. A lot of art things that people specially design all over the world. I'm not sure what to do with them. I'm a bit embarrassed to put them at home but it's too rude to throw them away. In my loft at home I've got about 30 or 40 portraits of myself."

▲ "The fans throw all sorts onstage. Anything you can see like flags...ah no there's not one here...um, yeah like teddy bears and weird hats. I got a peasant hat which is like a hat that the farmers wear. Which I wore that the gig that night."

▶ "It looks like a glass of red wine – which is the first thing I drink when I come offstage. Red wine is the only alcohol I ever drink onstage as well, though I don't usually drink onstage except water. We did a few gigs early days and it was the only alcohol that I found that didn't dry me out. It seems to lubricate things quite well."

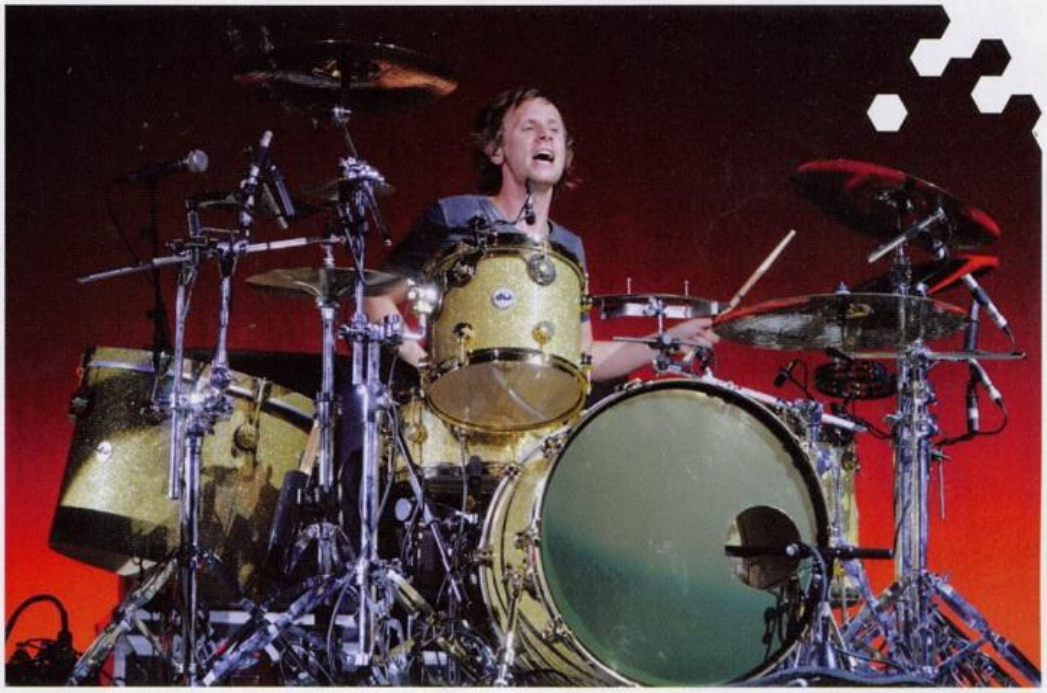
"WHEN SOMEONE THROWS A FLAG, THE RIGHT THING TO DO IS WRAP YOURSELF IN IT!"

"The crowd keep throwing flags – you can see that one ends up there. It just seems like the right thing to do is to wrap yourself up in it. Or at least put it on the bass drum, that always gets a big cheer. We were in Columbia on Independence Day. The crowd had all their faces painted. That was a real patriotic day. That night we went out and there didn't seem to be any bars open and we ended up in this place that was like school hall – not like a normal bar, but just like sports hall with just a few tables covered in booze. So we ended up getting involved with the local, traditional Independence Day night out which was good. It was a completely different type of night out to anything you see

HOWARD, DOMINIC

MEET Dom Howard

He's the man behind the drums, more often than not the first in front of the bar and has just lost his mobile phone (complete with Muse ringtone)



What is the cheapest/most expensive/weirdest present you've ever received form a fan?

"We got real nice clothes in Japan. And Chris got given a load of stuff for Alfie (his son)."

What do you have in your pockets right now?

"A lighter, a couple of pens, paracetamol and £9.26 in change."

If you could be a reincarnation of any dead rock star who would it be and who would you punch or kill?

"Jimi Hendrix."

What's your personal muse?

"I think to travel, see as much as you can and take everything you can."

What are each band member's worst habits?

"Matt's got Tourette's Syndrome. I diagnosed him. Chris drinks like a fish and looks like a teddy bear when he gets up in the morning."

What ringtone do you have on you mobile?

"I did have 'New Born' 'cos my friend sent it to me. But then I lost my phone."

What are your earliest memories of Muse?

"We felt young, even though we were probably about 20. We didn't get so out of control that we lost our minds, we stayed at a solid level. Back in those days we didn't think about the big picture – it was all about living a day at a time. Every little step felt amazing. I certainly felt out of control in those days. We felt naïve, almost more cynical about everything that was going on around us – we built up a lot of defensive barriers."

When did you notice Muse mania taking off?

"The touring thing became a lot more fun and we just wanted to delve into that kind of excess and have as many parties as possible. It was great, it was really funny. There were a few moments when we went close to the edge. We were doing mushrooms a lot around those days, particularly around Europe. You lose touch with reality, even the next day – you're still a bit out of it. We definitely lost the plot a little bit. There was definitely a few moments of filling up the bus with girls and having a laugh. That was a funny old time. When you're at that stage when you're not famous enough, you don't get recognised enough to feel uncomfortable in a group of people you've just played to. It'd involve organising and handing out lots of passes to the girls that were the hottest in the club and getting them all back in the room and putting these weird Venetian masks on and drinking and turning up the music really, really loud. It definitely went a bit *Eyes Wide Shut* for a while..."

How did success change your music?

"'Absolution' is a lot more concise and not so beserk as 'Origin of Symmetry'. That was us and John Leckie talking about little men that live in the centre of the Earth. But working with Rich (Costley), being bit more accustomed to American rock music, it had a very different sound."

"CHRIS LOOKS LIKE A TEDDY BEAR WHEN HE WAKES UP IN THE MORNING"

How did it feel to sell-out Wembley?

"Booking it was like playing poker, it felt like a gamble, but then we put it on sale and it sold out really quickly. That kind of step up into that area, we just thought, 'Why the fuck not?' You can do festivals, but why not do your own?"

What's it like recording at Matt's studio in Italy?

"You just get on a plane. It's kind of like driving down the road or driving across London, which might take you an hour and a half or something like that. So it's not really a big deal."

Can you see yourselves still doing it when you're as old as The Stones?

"Potentially, as long as we've still got a grip on reality – or a grip on music at least. If we can still play then maybe, but if we're really struggling to hold it together it'll just be embarrassing."

Are you old hands at headlining festivals?

"A festival is always very different to a tour because it's a spontaneous event that you're really tuned into. On tour it all rolls into one big show because it's the same production every night, but with festivals you always try to do something a bit special and unique for that particular event. You have to push the boat out."

SAM SCOTT-HUNTER/GETTY

Bracing themselves for success: Chris, Matt and Dom get ready for the oncoming craziness

Set t

FO

The CONTROLS For THE HEART Of the CHARTS

Muse are in confident and excited mood, having completed the most difficult, ambitious and brilliant album yet. The world is advised to look out...

REPRINTED FROM NME August 8 2006

TEXT: JAMES JAM
PHOTOGRAPHY: ED MILES

"Muse are peerless. We are the most unique band in the UK this decade." Matt Bellamy, singer and guitarist in prog tinged power trio Muse is lounging before us on the velveteen hotel suite sofa in a plush central London hotel. Looking the spitting image of the spiky haired, tragically iconic Sid Vicious, yet dressed in white braces, white vest, white trousers, Bellamy orders a pot of tea, a platter of biscuits, revs up his gob, and is off again...

"We exist, and have existed, on the fringes of every scene that has come along in the last ten years. There's *nobody* like us and there's *nobody* doing what we do." He laughs, he washes down the last of the biscuit crumbs and, with the mightiest hiccup of a smirk reiterates those last words with an iron forged pride: "There is *nobody* like us."

Flanked by lifelong bandmates Dominic Howard (drums, pink waistcoat, really, *really* likes the Yeah Yeah Yeahs) and the fuzzy faced Chris Wolstenhome (bass, pinstripe suit, really, *really* likes his kids), Matt is here today to talk about the bands' fourth album proper, the bedazzling, Number One in the charts with a bullet, 'Black Holes and Revelations'. And, he's on fine form, casually tossing forth missives about one-time rock nemesis Radiohead ("The electronic stuff is obviously just Aphex Twin. Personally, I'd just go to the source if I wanted to hear that kind of music"), like a man resolutely assured of his place within the world. And even more so, of his band's place within rock. Where on previous interview calls he'd stutter, babble, or get lost under the weight of his own reading lists, today he doesn't even bring up his beloved study of ufo-logy, whilst there's barely a sniff of any matter apocalyptic. Something's chilled Matt Bellamy out. We'd hazard a guess that making the album of the year might have something to do with it.

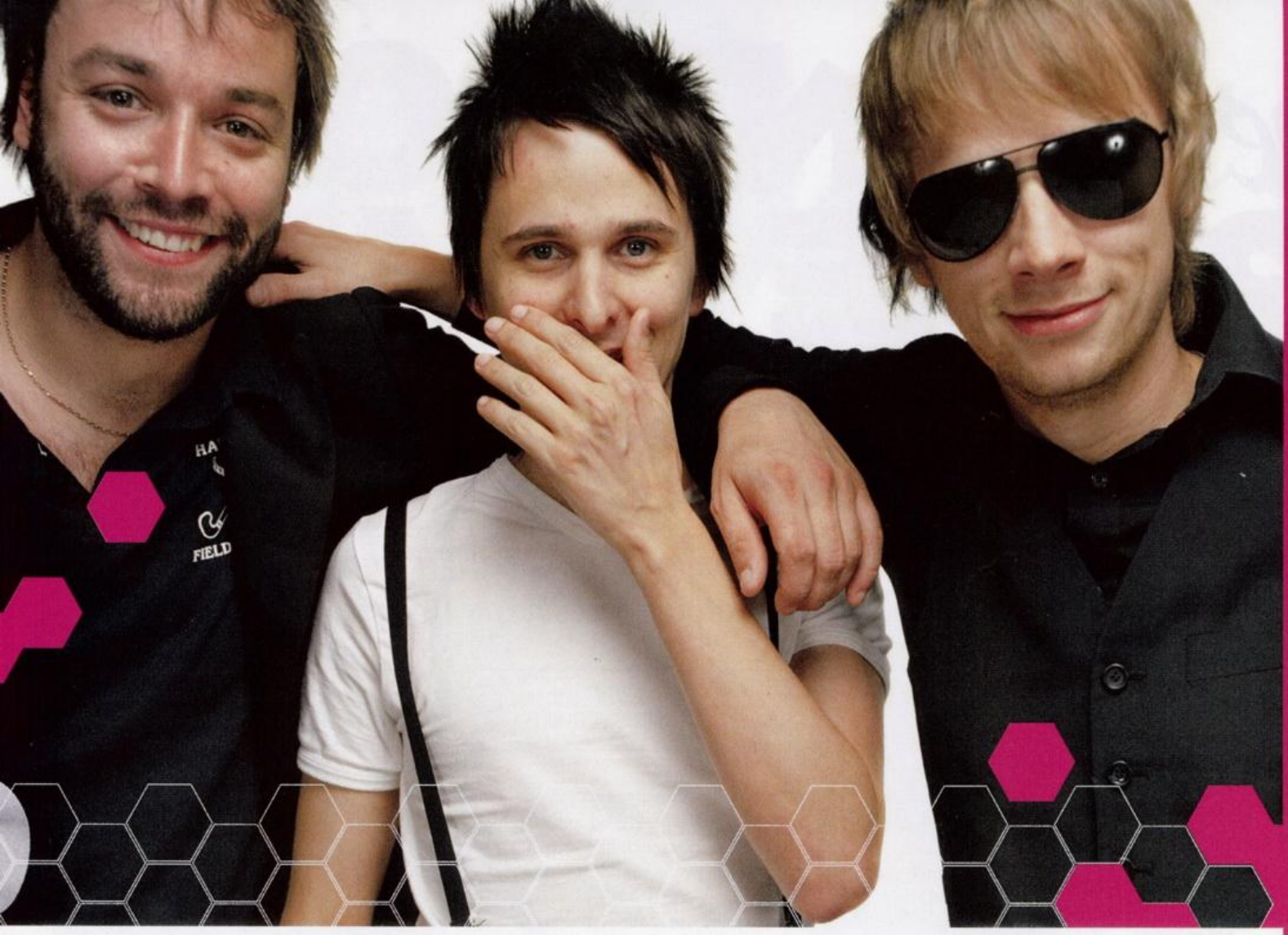
Often absurd, occasionally preposterous, always *brilliant,* 'Black Hole And Revelations' is a record that sounds much like you'd always hoped rock music would sound circa 2006. Brave, challenging, emotional, clever, noble, and frequently, very, very silly, it's a record that has arrived to devour your soul. You know that bit in Back to the Future where Marty McFly zooms around a vision of the future on a hoverboard? Recall that bit in 2001 Space Odyssey where people lived on the fucking moon? Now remember how cheated you felt on millennium eve when you realised the future looked *exactly* like the past... only you'd have to get up and get your PC fixed in the morning? Muse, and more specifically, 'Black Holes and Revelations', sound like the future was supposed to sound (and, in to our ears, the future was *always* supposed to sound like Rage Against The Machine, fronted by Freddie Mercury, produced by Giorgio Moroder, and playing the songs of Pink Floyd). Recorded in New York and northern Italy between spring 2005 and the early months of 2006, it's a work laboured by three young dudes from Teignmouth who never ceased taking bold steps in their on-going quest to be the most forward thinking band in Britain. 'Black Holes And Revelations' marks Muse's coronation as kings of boundary battering, brain bettering rock and roll. A thrillingly disparate collection of songs that reference the breathy, throbbing funk of Prince, the studious, art rock stutter of Franz Ferdinand, the filmic drama of spaghetti western scoring Ennio Morricone, and even, on occasion, the throaty, rock and fucking roll of The Strokes ("I liked that Strokes song," says Matt of a Strokes song he struggles to remember, though he does charitably hum a few bars for us on tape. "I thought it sounded like Muse!") 'Black Holes And Revelations' is the most sooped up, stella charged record Muse have ever made, a career high point in a career of making sooped up, stella charged records. Consider the cosmos groping love letter of 'Starlight', or the galloping sci-fi, hallucogentic gobbling prog rock stampede of 'Knights of Cydonia' (Cydonia being the region of Mars where evidence of water having once been there has been found, therefore suggesting life may once have existed on the red planet, ufo-logy fans). Heck, just listen to the first ten seconds of recent single 'Super Massive Black Hole'! It sounds like sex! With robots! Chris smiles a savvy, confident, yet understated smile.

"This is the best album we've ever made, I'm sure of that."

It certainly feels like light-years away from comparatively straight ahead debut 'Showbiz', likewise the gonzo metal stylings of 'Origin Of Symmetry', or the classical music indebted 'Absolution'. Muse have always been one of those bands you've looked to if you've ever believed rock can go one grid point forward. It's a record that delivers in such promise.

"It was a hard recording process making this album," sighs Matt, "in that it took a lot of time. It's the biggest sense of achievement I've ever had after making an album though. I've come out of the studio before feeling a bit compromised that we haven't had enough time. This time we've definitely got it right."

> "WE ARE THE MOST UNIQUE BAND IN THE UK THIS DECADE"
> MATT BELLAMY



The albums melting pot of such street-smart influence originated from Muse's time spent recording it in the Big Apple at the tail end of 2005. A place of block parties, late nights/early mornings and feel good vibrations.

"Going to New York tightened everything up," says Matt. "It got us more groove orientated. I don't know if that was the vibe of the city or what."

"It was a vibe thing," nods Dominic. "We found loads of positivity in New York. It's so fast and so busy, and it's hard to feel so dark about stuff when you're surrounded by thousands and thousands of people. We started going out to clubs and hanging out with friends and dancing."

Matt even took time out from the recording schedule to do a spot of DJing.

"I got a little *too* into it," he smirks. "I didn't really know how to use the mixer properly, yet there was this moment where I was playing Depeche Mode, with a fag in my mouth, and people were asking what the tune I was play was. I was like, "yeah, *this* is what DJing is about..."

Ask Muse what music was circling their orbit around this time and they'll speak of everything from early R&B records, to hidden art rock gems and electro-pop classics. Prod further and it's clear the general feel good flava of NYC was also behind the anti-funk strut of lead off single and album mopus operandi 'Supermassive Black Hole'. Described by Chris Wolstenhome as their attempt to fuse their love of weirdo Belgian art rock like dEUS and Soulwax with the dynamics of, say, a classic Solomon Burke or James Brown cut, the former single sounds about as far removed from the claustrophobia and tetchy unease of Muse's back catalogue as you could imagine. As a shift in direction it's bloody cataclysmic.

Yet it was almost never so. Way before New York drew out the funky beast embedded in Muse's soul, long before Matt relocated the band into his Italian villa for follow-up sessions (his neighbour? One George Clooney), the trio had begun the recording process back in 2005 in deepest, darkest Provence. Holed up at Chateau Miraval - a 17th century Knights Templar stockade, cherry-picked as a place where they could "get together" and get away from "the distractions of home" like internet, mobile reception, television and other people, it was the perfect location for three fertile imaginations to thrive and flourish. Or not.

"Things got so secluded and detached in France that the vibe was getting dark there," shudders Dominic. "It was great at first, but then we started getting fearful of the world and being out there on our own. We started sitting around all the time discussing World War III or we'd talk about what would happen if the end of the world happened. There was a lot of paranoia there. We started talking about living off the land and stuff."

"I started looking inside myself a lot," adds Bellamy. "I was reading loads of books about the declining oil situation, and learning about wars that were going on that I didn't know anything about. I started envisioning a time when we were all squabbling like Mad Max or something. We just knew we had to get out of there. If we'd stayed in France for the whole of the album, it probably would have ended up total prog," laughs Matt, adding some levity to our conversation. "Songs like (six minute peaking, psyche rock, album closing track) 'Knights Of Cydonia' would've been twenty minutes long! There were tracks we recorded that aren't on the album that are over eight minutes long! At one point we contemplated a triple album – the first disc being devolution of rock and the third being a whole load of twidly synth noises."

> "THERE WAS A COVER OF 'KNIGHTS OF CYDONIA' BEFORE WE'D EVEN RELEASED IT!""
> CHRIS WOLSTENHOLME

"In France, we were constantly making things, but we never seemed to finish anything," concludes Matt. "When we relocated to New York, the vibe changed almost overnight. It was then that we decided to book Reading."

Muse's headline slots at Reading and Leeds 2006 (going on after Arctic Monkey's nonetheless - "Good band," says Bellamy with casual flippancy. "Should get the crowd warmed up") looks set to be the moment Muse, the veritable mungo-monster monogoloth earmark their arrival into the mainstream.

It's also apt reward for their legions of bookish devotees – even more crazy than the Monkeys' fanbase - still drunk on the glory of Muse's headlining slot at Glastonbury 2004. It's a performance that will give props to those astute enough to have kept faith in a constantly evolving concern, a band tirelessly toiling over devices to pull their fans further into their world. Muse – as Matt Bellamy's recent japes hiding code within Muse's setlists prove - are one of those bands where the music only marks the beginning of the muthafuckin' *trip*.

"With the record sleeves, and the visuals, and the actual show," affirms Dominic, "we've always put a lot into it rather than it just being about a band playing on stage. We've always tried to do something more than that."

"I think we appeal to the more fanatical side of people," asserts Bellamy. "Our fans are pretty fanatical, and we've always tried to be loyal to them. When I look out into the front row of the audience I know those people have a genuine emotional connection with us."

"There was a cover of 'Knights of Cydonia' floating around on the internet, way before people had heard our version," chuckles Chris. "We'd played it at Radio One's One Big Weekend – nobody had heard the album version at that point – and they'd worked out how to play it from that. There was a link on our messageboard to a band who'd recorded it!" The bassist laughs a hearty laugh and shakes his head in near disbelief. "It was frightingly accurate too..."

Seven years after they first came to our attention, 2006 marks the moment Muse rise from the clutches of their adoring acolytes and into the embrace of the pop masseeeef. For many, this will be their first Muse album, the key to the kingdom of this most worshipped of bands. For the long-term, hardcore fans its ample affirmation they were always right in placing such belief in the three rock and roll soothsayers.

"We've never been the biggest band in the country," says Matt, the merest sense of inferiority permeating today's otherwise swaggering patter, "and we've never been the most hyped band in the country. I've seen a lot of bands come and go in the ten years we've been around..." The singer's voice tails off and the room falls silent. And? "And, well, we're here... y'know?"

Matt models one of his less flamboyant outfits for the camera

What Was Happening

- North Korea test-fires missiles; liquids and gels banned from check-in baggage after 21 arrests in connection with an alleged terrorist plot involving planes flying from UK to US
- Franz Ferdinand, Muse and Pearl Jam headline Reading & Leeds
- Shakira ft Wyclef Jean 'Hips Don't Lie' Number One

The Artwork

Shot by legendary sleeve artist Storm Thurguson – who'd also shot the 'Absolution' sleeve – in the Spanish desert near a bomb testing area, the sleeve was laden with imagery and metaphors, such the four horsemen seated at the table, each wearing a suit based on an ailment of humanity and represented on the table by a different coloured horse: a pale horse for death, a red one for war, black for famine and white for the antichrist.

REPRINTED FROM NME
JUNE 30 2006

The Massive Hit

BLACK HOLES & REVELATIONS

For their magnificent fourth record and US breakthrough album, Britain's grandest rockers boldy go where no band has ever gone before...

So... just how pretentious, stupid, bombastic, overblown, bold, contradictory, magnificent, portentous, histrionic, grand, eccentric and just plain mental is Muse's new record? Well, there's a moment as 'Hoodoo' morphs into epic finale 'Knights Of Cydonia' when a piano that sounds like it's heralding the destruction of the universe gives way to the sound of galloping horses. Horses! It's as if the Four Horsemen themselves have been called forth from the underworld by the closing seconds of track ten. Then there's laser guns, explosions and sirens before a choir of deathly damned begin a dreadful, unearthly wail. It's The Book Of Revelations gone rock and it's the most overblown thing in the world. Except – get this - it's not even *of* this world: Cydonia is the region of Mars where evidence of pyramids and ocean beds are the best evidence we have to prove there was once life there. We're not in Albion anymore...

Barking stuff, obviously, but why does music have to be so serious, so drab, so *authentic*? Rock is the only artform where authenticity is held to be the supreme accolade - more important than moving or provoking you. It's as if the whole rock canon has been assembled by a committee of sociologists rather than hedonists, madmen and geniuses. When did using imagination become a crime?

Muse are classic whipping boys for the Keeping It Real campaigners, having never written songs about bouncers, waiting for taxis or fancying girls on dancefloors. Why when you've got the entire cosmos to sing about? Take the first single for example – You've heard it by now, even if you think you haven't. It's the one with daring electro shuffle, like Kylie grooving with a goth Prince. It's called 'Supermassive Black Hole' and its simultaneously the most serious and hilarious musical moments of the year. Muse may have been inspired to write this by dancing to Franz in New York clubs, but they've made a classic of their own, the sort of song that Marilyn Manson would make if he were half as subversive as he thought.

The sexy shimmy-shimmy-fuck-yeah sound of 'SMBH' is unique. Elsewhere they're evolving in other ways. There's the sound of 'Enjoy The Silence'-era Depeche Mode electro ('Map Of The Problematique') and a smoky Frank Sinatra croon that quotes the opera song 'Ave Maria'. And this time not all the pianos sound like they're falling into the crack of hell. Some in fact could grace a Keane album. 'Starlight' has that tinkly piano melody and could – whisper it – be a love song. A love song about black holes, revelations, the end of the world and that sort of thing, but a love song all the same. Meanwhile 'Invincible's military drumroll rhythm is topped by Matt Bellamy's best Tom-from-Keane impression until, at 3 minutes 51, there's the familiar shrill tapping guitar histrionics as the slumbering Muse juggernaut wakes and advances like it's rolling over Chaplin's podgy face. You can practically hear his head burst.

Elsewhere there's still plenty that's business arpeggios, the doomy pianos and the multi-tracked, Queen-like vocals that all bring to mind a thousand 100ft Matt Bellamies stomping down your street turning buildings to dust with a single blast. It all hurtles towards the aforementioned 'Knights Of Cydonia', the first US single; as huge as 'Stockholm Syndrome', as huge as anything they did before. Its galloping rhythm has the same headlong exhilarating thrills of great metal epics like Led Zeppelin's 'Achilles Last Stand' and Iron Maiden's 'Run To The Hills').

Muse have made a ridiculous, overblown, ambitious pretentious and utterly brilliant album, with more thrills than their previous three put together which, in an alternative universe would leave them at the end of an epic lineage that connecting the greatest bands of all time: Queen, Roxy Music, Ziggy (not his mere human form of 'Bowie'), ABC, Frankie Goes To Hollywood , Adam And The Ants and Queens Of The Stone Age. In *this* universe of Dadrock authenticity, they've made a record with enough power and ambition that it might just rewrite that particular rulebook. Whichever way, 'Black

The Details

Take A Bow ★★★★★
Starlight ★★★★★
Supermassive Black Hole ★★★★★
Map Of The Problematique ★★★★
Soldier's Poem ★★★
Invincible ★★★★★
Assassin ★★★
Exo-Politics ★★★★
City Of Delusion ★★★★
Hoodoo ★★
Knights Of Cydonia ★★★★★

Released: June 11, 2006
Producer: Rich Costey, Muse
Recorded: New York, France
Chart Position: 1
Singles: Supermassive Black Hole, Starlight, Knights Of Cydonia, Invincible, Map Of The Problematique

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NOVEMBER 18 2006

SUPERMASSIVE FREAK SHOW

MANCHESTER MEN ARENA

NOVEMBER 11, 2006

The 'Black Holes and Revelations' tour is the most ambitious stage show of Muse's career so far, involving a gigantic satellite drum riser, lasers aplenty and glitter cannons all over the shop...

As rockstars go, 'Mad' Matt Bellamy has always gone that extra mile. So Gary Numan's got a pilot's license? Mad Matt Bellamy will raise you a *jetpack*. So Thom Yorke valiantly rails against the twin evils of Bush and Blairism? Mad Matt Bellamy reckons they're all a bunch of inbreeding, shapeshifting reptiles from the planet Zog anyway. And when Mad Matt Bellamy decides it's time for his band to embark on their biggest-ever tour of Britain's arenas, you'd better believe it'll be like nothing you've ever seen before. Last we saw of them, Muse had upgraded themselves into a snake-hipped, sleek trousered space-age sex-rock megatron. Since then, they've been away in foreign parts enjoying an evermore-surreal journey into the unknown that saw them fall off the mushroom wagon and take up residence on a bouncy castle.

And now they return victorious. Fifteen minutes before they take the stage, however, the 15,000 souls gathered at the Manchester Evening News Arena could be forgiven for thinking that tonight would be just like Any Other Gig. Until suddenly, and with all the warning of a Martian probe up your rusty sheriff's badge, the lights die, a guitar howls and wails from the distant recesses of a spent supernova and the curtain rises to reveal...a giant, er, blender. With some pretty lights on it. But wait! The blender slowly begins to open, and there's Dominic Howard inside, dwarfed by what has now revealed itself to be a massive stationary satellite. Bassist Chris Wolstenholme struts on from stage right, and with a final, distorted squeal of guitar, here he is; an operatic pixie in wizard's sleeves, bounding onstage in mad-eyed glee and looking like he's about to reveal everything that the indefinable *they* don't want you to know.

Things finally begin to take shape; the cacophony gradually morphs into 'Knights Of Cydonia', with Bellamy attempting to recreate Beethoven's 9th using only the power of vocal range and crazy eyes. There can't be many classic singles about pyramid formations on Mars – in fact, we're willing to wager that there are none at all – but bonkers as Bellamy's worldview is, musically, it makes for an utterly compelling spectacle. By the end of the song, he's writhing on his knees, thrusting his guitar into his groin with such ferocity, you're no longer sure whether he's playing the thing, or just violating it. It's so completely, hilariously, over the top that the top is only visible with a Hubble-strength telescope, but tearing your eyes away from it takes more willpower than anyone here can muster. Welcome to Muse v2.0, a tri-headed, stadium-devouring leviathan whose dastardly ambition knows no limits and who cackle maniacally in the face of convention. Take 'Plug In Baby', for example. Opening with a wail of histrionic feedback of such terrifying frequency that it surely renders Matt Bellamy the mortal enemy of every dog in Manchester, it nevertheless sparks a mass mosh which, from where we're sitting, looks nothing short of beautiful. Then giant balloons full of confetti are fired into the audience and everything goes apeshit. Or 'Supermassive Black Hole', for that matter, tonight sounding like a hypersexy Franz Ferdinand glugging on amyl nitrate and choreographed by gigantic, disco dancing cyborgs.

> "TEARING YOUR EYES AWAY FROM THIS SHOW IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE"

Yet it's not all about the bombast; songs like the mariachi-flecked 'City Of Delusion' and, more specifically, the utterly gorgeous interstellar lullaby that is 'Starlight' prove that even when things are (relatively) pared down, Muse still know their way around a lighters-aloft melody.

As mentioned, of course, it looks stunning. And then there's Dom Howard's between-song banter ("Things go out of tune, that's just what happens with live rock n' roll!" – cheers for the update, Dom). All in all, the only thing that disappoints about tonight's show is that it had to go and do something so conventional, so predictable, 1so very *earthbound* as actually come to an end.

End it does, however, although at least it has the good grace to close with a ripping 'Stockholm Syndrome' – at the end of which, Matt sacrificially offers up his guitar (presumably not one of the stupidly expensive deathbastard ones that he apparently controls everything from the light show to the pyrotechnics with) to the audience – and 'Take A Bow' which crescendos with jets of white smoke bursting forth from the stage and the kind of frenzied screaming that can probably be heard in Liverpool.

Muse are already so far off the map, speculation as to where they go from here is pointless. An album investigating the mysteries of the fourth dimension, recorded entirely on the International Space Station? First band on the moon? Targeted for extermination by the shadowy *They?* Only Mad Matt Bellamy knows, but one thing's for sure, it's going to take a whole lot of record company wedge to top this tour for sheer spectacle. We may be no closer to the revelations but ooh, what a journey. **Barry Nicolson**

Knights of the increasingly big table: (left) Dom sits inside "the giant easter egg", (above) Matt goes for some guitar acrobatics and (main pic) brings Manchester to its knees by the power of his FX pedals

The Setlist

MEN ARENA
NOVEMBER 11 2006

Knights of Cydonia
Hysteria
Map of the Problematique +
Maggie's Farm outro
Butterflies & Hurricanes
Showbiz (watch)
City of Delusion
Plug In Baby
Forced In (instrumental)
Bliss (extended)
Citizen Erased (watch)
Hoodoo
Invincible
Supermassive Black Hole
Time Is Running Out
New Born
Whistling + Starlight
Stockholm Syndrome
Take a Bow

NY NORTH

REPRINTED FROM NME
MARCH 3 2007

Gigs Of T
THE ROAD T

How exactly did Muse go about putting on the mos

August 2006: THE BAND DECIDE TO PLAN THEIR OWN SUMMER GIGS

Dominic Howard (drums): "Doing your own big summer shows is something that we've always wanted to do, and it seems like more bands are able to do it these days. It was like, well, what are we going to do? You know, there's Hyde Park, Milton Keynes and Hyde Park. So it was like, what about Wembley? Let's jump into that!"

Anthony Addis (Muse's manager): "I'd heard that Wembley definitely had to be finished by this year's cup finals. So we had a decision, I bought it up, talking to the agent, to our promoters, talked to the boys. The view was Wembley was a definite possibility."

Matt Bellamy (vocals, guitar): "It means a lot for it to be in England, we were glad because this is the place where we play our best gigs. It means a lot now where we are, to be this level in England and to be able to play these sort of venues."

DH: "Wembley were quite keen on having a British band opening it as it's the new Stadium. To roll in with Bon Jovi, it's not the coolest look.. I think they wanted to keep it local. You typically associate Stadium gigs with Queen and those kind of bands, but these days more young, new bands are (playing stadiums) like Arctic Monkeys, Coldplay and Red Hot Chilli Peppers. The youngers bands are getting into that sort of environment, it's not just the old dinosaurs."

December 4 2006: MUSE ANNOUNCE THE SHOW WITH A PRESS CONFERENCE PITCHSIDE AT THE STADIUM

DH: "It's amazing! We were very scared when we first walked in there. It's massive. We're glad we did go, we needed to go, because by seeing it, it completely changed our idea of what the show was to be."

December 9 2006: TICKETS FOR JUNE 16 SHOW GO ON SALE. THEY SELL OUT IN 45 MINUTES

Izzy Lockhart Smith (fan): "I set my alarm for 8.30 am. I logged onto to a site selling tickets and both me and the website were on the brink of cardiac arrest as the clock ticked painfully towards 9am. I was NOT going to settle for some sinister area of Bloc 187 Level 5. Fortunately, thanks to an automatic slip into 'Muse obsessive' mode, I was soon the proud owner of a pair of standing tickets. I headed off to the forums and it was only then that I realised the true nature of my achievement."

Jonathan Price (fan): "I overslept for some reason, and by the time I'd jumped out of bed and got to my computer, all the tickets had sold out! I was absolutely mortified, and the possiblity of paying over the odds for a ticket off a tout started seeming like a reality. I went on the forums, and people on there could not believe how quickly it had sold out. There were loads of people posting about how excited they were, but also people like me!"

December 9 2006: AFTER THE RAPID SALE THE BAND ADD A SECOND DATE ON JUNE 17

DH: "We were in a tourbus in Europe, and it all happened while we were asleep. The decision to put on another day was made whilst I was in bed! It blew our minds, we had no idea. No one expects that."

AA: "It went out on Radio 1 that we'd sold out in the first hour. And that decision had to be made to add an extra date. The hardest decision was if there were enough fans out there to do two."

MB: "I definitely didn't sleep very well for quite a while, for quite a few weeks after we decided to do the Wembley shows. And I think the first night I slept was when it actually sold out. I thought, 'I can chill out now'."

January 2007: KLAXONS REVEAL THEY TURNED DOWN MUSE'S OFFER TO PLAY A WEMBLEY STADIUM GIG

Jamie Reynolds (Klaxons) : "It was quite a drunken night down the pub and I just said, 'Nah'. I don't know why, I didn't mean it."

James Righton (Klaxons) : "We got the chance to open up Wembley Stadium. Officially the first ever gig at Wembley and Jamie turned it down!"

DH: "I went to see Klaxons and I was like,

be Century
O WEMBLEY

spectacular show of their career? Like this...

'I think you're cool, we should do some gigs?' and they were like, 'Our manager doesn't want us to support any bands anymore.' So I guess they kind of said no, but everyone was a bit drunk."

MB: "Lily Allen said she might play too!"

DH: "It's going to feel like a bit of a festival. We want to have three support bands each day and different bands, over the two nights. Ultimately it's a Muse gig, but it'll also feel like a bit more than that. It's going to seem like a big event. Wolfmother may play. Maybe Bloc Party as well."

February 23 2006: MUSE HEAD OUT ON AN ASIAN TOUR, BUT ARE FOCUSED ON WEMBLEY

MB: "We're already thinking about the setlist now. We could probably do a two hour set without getting too dull."

DH: "The most we've played has been one hour 45 at the last show we did on the tour. We can hold it for over two hours which is what people kind of expect in a Stadium. We've got four albums-worth and we can build some dynamics into the set. You know, you need the whole chill out section, bring it all down in front of 5000 people. You need the slow and then the all out rock. So somehow we'll get there."

MB: "Every time we watch the cup final or the Olympics, I'll be able to say 'Yeah, I played there!'. I quite like the fact it's going to be there, and in the new one, which is going to be there for years!"

"WE'LL PROBABLY END UP BLOWING ALL THE MONEY ON THE STAGE SET!"

MATT BELLAMY

February 14 2006: THE DAY AFTER WINNING BEST LIVE BAND AT THE BRITS THE BAND START WORKING ON THE STAGE DESIGNS

MB: "It's is a different kind of show. You can't just do the same old thing as our arena tour. You've really got to build the whole thing from scratch yourself, the whole stage."

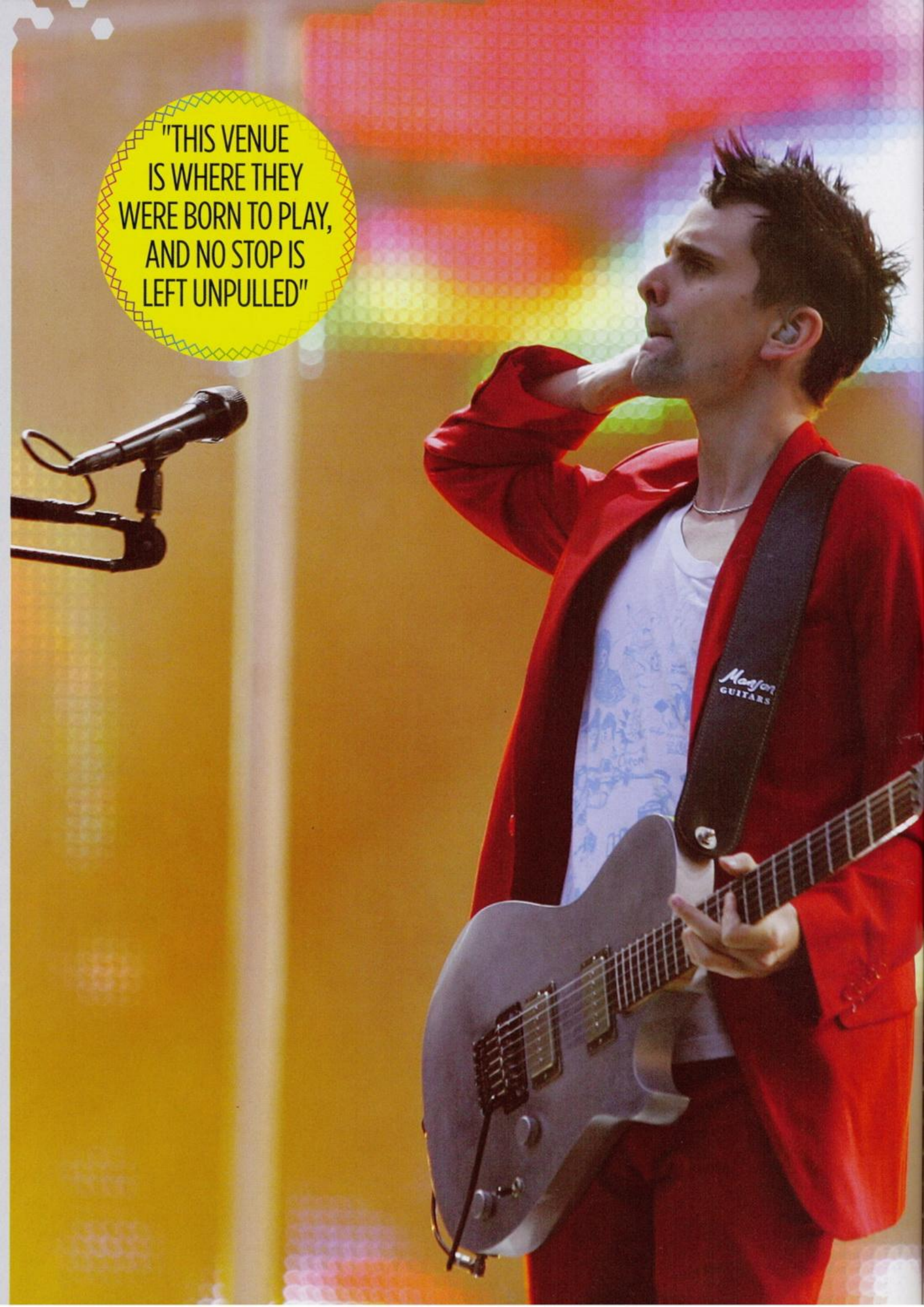
DH: "It's a big deal and it's going to be months to get that shit together. We've always been actively involved with the whole production. The visual stuff, making all the films and getting all the right stuff for all the right songs and designing all the shows. We're involved in drawing out ideas and talking about things. We will work with someone else to actually realise it. "

MB: "We're having a meeting with some architects to build the stage, to shape what we want. So hopefully get a few ideas into motion there. And then it'll just be an exchange of sketches and ideas."

AA: "We always believe we must give the audience a show, as if this is the final show. That is it, every show has that meaning, nothing less. Everything – the equipment, the show, the visuals, everything has to be worked out and thought out to the nth degree."

MB: "We'll probably end up blowing all of the money on the stage set! Which I think is in the spirit of it."

Photographer Andy Willsher: "I went up to shoot from the top of the stands during 'Supermassive Black Hole'. I just remember feeling really unsafe – it felt like the stadium was shaking from people moshing, which was ironic as it had only just been built!"


"THIS VENUE IS WHERE THEY WERE BORN TO PLAY, AND NO STOP IS LEFT UNPULLED"
Manson
GUITARS

FLYING HIGH UP IN THE SKY

WEMBLEY STADIUM

JUNE 16, 2007

REPRINTED FROM NME JUNE 23 2007

It is the night of both their lives and of our lives. In a space finally (just about) big enough to contain their ambitions and their riffs, Matt, Chris and Dom leave 70,000 flabbergasted

With Wagnerian war music blaring out, three men rise from a podium in the dead-centre of Wembley Stadium in a torrent of ticker-tape – one dressed in sombre black, one in sorcerer red and the other in Klaxon green trousers that, themselves, constitute a laser show.

They stride along an extended catwalk to a stage guarded by 50ft satellite dishes strafing the crowd with their spotlight irises, overlooked by an alien council of glowing brain orbs (or giant white balloons if you prefer) in the stands behind the stage. They pick out the tune from *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* and then gallop straight into 'Knights Of Cydonia' with all the space age pomp and pageantry you'd expect from Britain's greatest rock band finally breaking into the stadiums after such a lengthy besiegement.

Okay, so maybe the floor isn't *actually* a video screen, but who's quibbling? At long last, tonight Muse ascend to the venue they were born to play, and no stop is left unpulled.

It's a big night for them, and a big night for all of us too. For 20 years the stadium circuit has been a closed shop, owned wholesale by gnarly old AOR 'legends' and only briefly invaded for one off 'events' by the likes of Oasis and Blur. Muse were always leading the way in striving for arena status – their bouncy white planets and glitter cannons were a stab at a stadium show even when they were crammed into Brixton Academy on album two – but not since Depeche Mode in the '80s has an act broken into the stadiums worldwide with their cool and credibility intact.

And that's exactly what Muse do tonight; this is our generation of bands storming the gates of the Mammoth League, letting off all the flam and fireworks and redecorating the place with futuro-rock designs. Franz, Razorlight, Strokes, Monkeys, we're in! Now let's cause stadium indie *chaos*.

Here's how you do it. Gigantic lap-dancing androids on the screens for 'Supermassive Black Hole' (Muse's 'The Fly' and their stepping stone to Wembley; you don't get to crossover to this degree without writing a 'Supermassive Black Hole'). Huge jets of steam as Matt Bellamy switches effortlessly from manic, supersonic solos to Rachmaninoff concert piano in the middle of 'Butterflies And Hurricanes' (apparently he can play triangle like a motherfucker too – the kid's got talent). Fireworks on the screens during 'Invincible'; firework waterfalls overhead during 'Starlight'. Walls of flame scorching the final chord of 'Take A Bow'. And, during 'Blackout', two real life silver surfers doing aerial acrobatics suspended from massive inflatable balloons 100ft above the crowd. Stick that up your hydraulic stage and do a boring duet with it, Mr Jagger.

Of course to many of us, simply playing Wembley Stadium takes Muse off the credibility radar. Alternative music is all about discovering Hadouken! in the upstairs room of Shoreditch boozer before any of your mates hear it; as soon as a band sells a stadiums worth of tickets they're irrelevant populist toss, right?

Well not any more. If Muse are now a dinosaur band, they're megacool Transformer robo-dinosaurs with space shuttle rockets for wings. And, crucially, they're still *yours*.

As 'Plug In Baby' screams its titanic pop brilliance at the open skies, 'Starlight' prompts actual 'Radio Ga Ga' clapping and 'Stockholm Syndrome"s ancient arcade game visuals and epic punk metal chorus (imagine a typhoon hitting an opera house built on an erupting volcano, then add riffs) make us feel like Wembley itself is the mothership at lift-off, it becomes clear that we now *own* music, from the dingiest Barfly to the shiniest enormodome.

So drop the indie sneer for a minute, gawp around at the twinkle of 70,000 mobile phones held aloft during 'Unintended' and celebrate. Because right here, right now, it is time for superheroes. **Mark Beaumont**

ANDY WILLSHER

The Setlist

WEMBLEY STADIUM
JUNE 16 2007

'Knights Of Cydonia'
'Hysteria'
'Supermassive Blackhole'
'Map Of The Problematique'
'City Of Delusion'
'Butterflies & Hurricanes'
'Citizen Erased'
'Hoodoo'
'Feeling Good'
'Sunburn'
'Invincible'
'Starlight'
'Man Of Mystery'
'Time Is Running Out'
'Newborn'
'Soldiers Poem'
'Unintended'
'Blackout'
'Plug In Baby'
'Micro Cuts'
'Stockholm Syndrome'
'Take A Bow'

"You can either be a violent person and go out there

"Just before take-off flames started coming from one of the engines. Every time the pilot revved the engine the flames got worse and worse. We thought we were going to die"

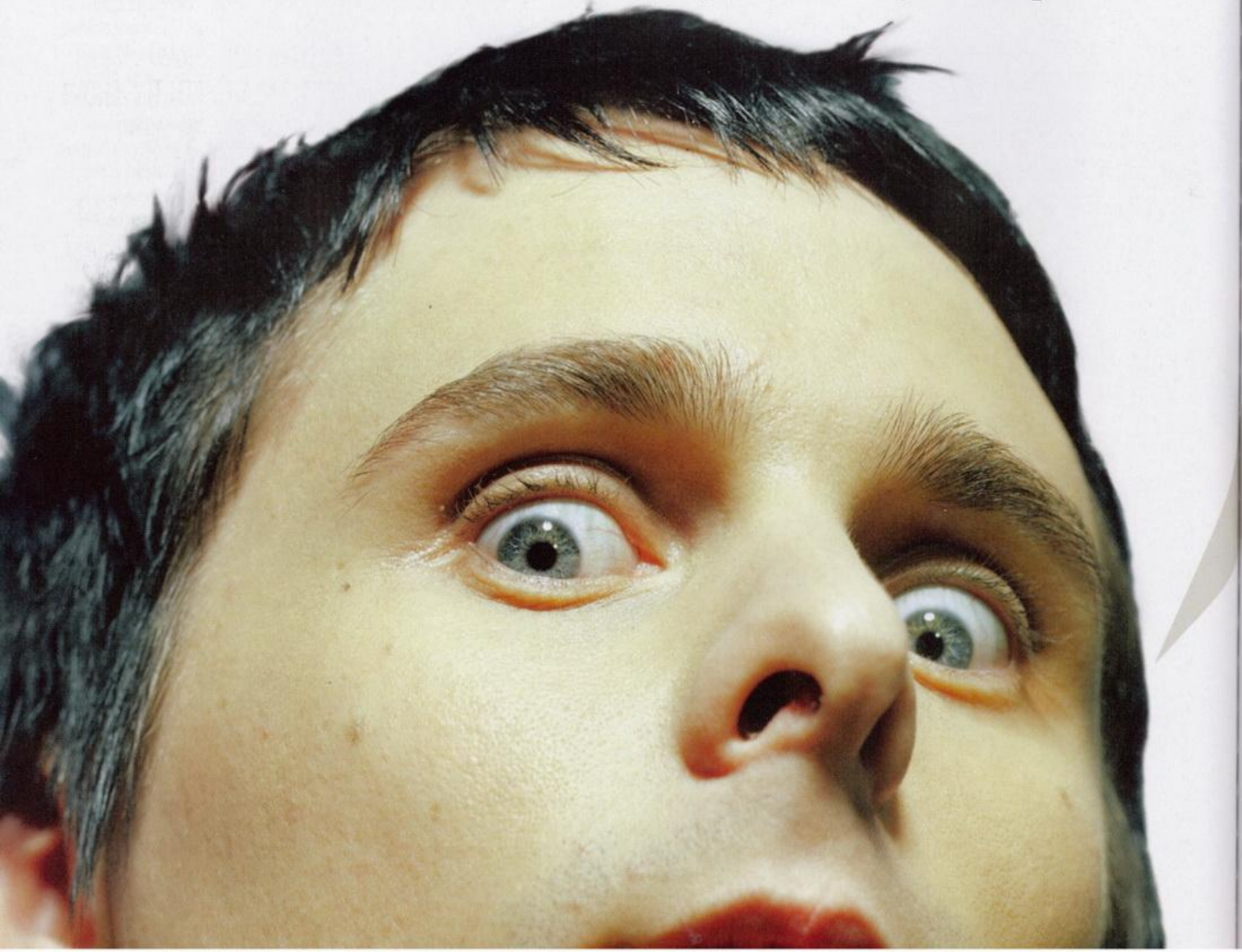
ON THEIR PLANE ALMOST CATCHING FIRE ON A DASH FROM THE UK TO GERMANY AFTER WINNING THEIR FIRST NME AWARD, MARCH 2000

"When you're sitting in a bar and the lights are a bit dim, you start going a bit dizzy and you're not even sure what you're name is and you're surrounded by people you don't know. Then you start thinking 'I'm not even sure how I got here'. I get that a lot. Especially onstage. And that's when I start chucking guitars around"

ON HIS RED MIST MOMENTS, MAY 2004

Matt Bellamy's MADDEST QUOTES

The things that come out of Muse's mainest, maddest man's mouth often make him seem like he's a few sandwiches short of a picnic. But boy, what a picnic...



and kill people, or you can be in a rock band." MARCH 2000

"I didn't feel any pain at first, then I spat out this liquid and there were gushes of red stuff spurting out all over the microphone. I ran backstage and started puking up"

ON SPEARING HIS CHIN ONSTAGE WITH HIS OWN GUITAR, MAY 2004

"Part of me wants to just blow up the world! It's all crap! And part of me thinks, 'Mmm, I want to be in love with everyone!'"

SEPTEMBER 2000

"At Wembley, I wanted to put up a giant Tesla coil – one of those things that shoots up lightning – in the middle of the crowd with a fence around it. I wanted to simulate electricity going off and us appearing in a puff of smoke. But we weren't allowed to do that. We weren't allowed to fly in on blimps either, in case they exploded."

ON HEALTH & SAFETY SCUPPERING THEIR WEMBLEY SHOW IDEAS, JUNE 2007

"WE'RE TRYING TO GET A UFO TO COME IN FOR V. HEALTH & SAFETY AS USUAL ARE RUINING IT ALL"

AUGUST 2008

"I SEE THE ONLY THING TO DO IS TO BUILD SOME MOLOTOV COCKTAILS AND START BUNGING THEM AT FUCKING MPS. THE VOTE WE GET IS USELESS. DEMOCRACY IS A FUCKING JOKE. ROCK'S SUPPOSED TO SHAKE THAT UP AND SAY 'FUCK THAT, THIS IS SHIT! LET'S BURN DOWN THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT!'"

NOVEMBER 2006

"It's the best thing I've ever experienced. It spins around, you take off, you fly and you feel like you're the next step up on the evolutionary ladder. I've been up to 3000 ft in it. Then things go a bit blurry"

ON HIS JETPACK, SEPTEMBER 2003

"WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO EXPERIMENT WITH THE SHOW, AND EXPERIMENT WITH WHAT'S POSSIBLE. AND I THINK ONE DAY WE COULD END UP GETTING A FULL CAST IN, GETTING STAGE SETS, DIVIDING THE SHOW INTO SCENES. I'D LIKE TO DO A FULL MUSICAL, GETTING FULL CHOIR, THE FULL DANCERS IN. I'D BE INTERESTED TO SEE WHETHER THAT'S POSSIBLE. IT WOULD BE THE STORY OF A LONE RANGER, SOME KIND OF WEIRD FUTURISTIC LONE RANGER TYPE, TRAVELLING ROUND THE WORLD WAITING TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM THE END OF THE WORLD AND THE DESTRUCTION OF EVERYTHING. IT'D BE TO DO WITH SAVING THE WORLD"

MATT ON THE IDEA OF MUSE: THE MUSICAL, 2007

"The peak must've been Vegas. We met someone with a load of mushrooms. We managed to rent a massive bouncy castle in the desert and we managed to get these girls to dress up as aliens and various other weird little Red Riding Hood costumes and we had this strange bouncy castle psychedelic party. It all went a bit Twin Peaks at one point."

ON PSYCHEDELICS ON THEIR 2006 US TOUR

"THE LAST BOOK I READ WAS CALLED 'BRAINWASHING: THE SCIENCE OF THOUGHT CONTROL'. I LEARNED HOW TO BRAINWASH PEOPLE, WHICH IS QUITE USEFUL, BUT YOU HAVE TO USE QUITE EXTREME METHODS. IT STARTS WITH 'MILIEU CONTROL' WHERE YOU CONTROL A PERSON'S OUTSIDE INFLUENCES, AND ENDS WITH PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT. IT'S PRETTY DARK..."

ON HIS LATEST BEDSIDE READING, JUNE 2007

DEAN CHALKLEY

VIVE THE *Resistance*

Having conquered their first stadium gigs, Muse welcome **NME** *into their studio in the glorious Lake Como in Italy to hear their new album. We find a band about to unleash a darkly paranoid masterpiece*

REPRINTED FROM NME JULY 25 2009

TEXT: HAMISH MACBAIN
PHOTOGRAPHY: DEAN CHALKLEY

Some words to describe Lake Como, Lombardy, Northern Italy: tranquil, peaceful, serene, total fucking parad... Actually, scratch that: here are some words, written by one Percy Bysshe Shelley, about the very same place: "It exceeds anything I ever beheld in beauty. It is long and narrow, and has the appearance of a mighty river winding among the mountains and the forests" (always did have a way with words, that lad). Above, dotted around one of the largest, deepest lakes in all of Europe are some of the most incredible houses you could ever wish to see. George Clooney owns one, which he lent to David Beckham earlier this year. In another, James Bond recuperated (and of course got laid) in *Casino Royale*, while in another Darth Vader – Anakin to his ma – tied the knot to his childhood sweetheart in secret.

Oh yeah, and in another, but a short journey from the studio where he and his band have just finished recording their fifth album, lives a boy named Matt Bellamy.

Some words to describe 'The Resistance', Muse's fifth, first post-Wembley-shaking album, off the back of one very loud playback through said studio's mixing desk: romantic, yet awash with 21st century claustrophobia – a record with things on its mind. Opener 'Uprising' finds Matt singing, over a Marilyn Manson-style electro-glam stomp, of how "*paranoia is in bloom*" and how "*the fat cats should have a heart attack*" and how "*they push drugs to keep us all confined*". In fact, The same 'they' recur on the second, title track – Matt wondering whether 'they' will "*find our hiding place*" and opining, over tribal drums and a piano melody in the style of *us down*". Elsewhere, there is talk of how "*you and me fall in line/To be punished for unproven crimes*" ('United States Of Eurasia'), and how "*you learn by the numbers/Losing life's wonder*" ('Guiding Light') and, most explicitly of all, how this young Lake Como resident wants to "*push it beyond peaceful protest*" so he can "*speak in a language that they*" – 'they' again – "*will understand*" ('Unnatural Selection'). 'MK Ultra"s spidery riff is topped by talk of "*replacing love and happiness with fear*", and the closing 'Exogenesis: Symphony' – which, over three parts, clocks in at over 12 minutes – similarly paints a picture, over classical strings recorded in Milan, of "*the edge of all our fears*".

A scary place, then, that world outside the window.

"Watching the news has been a major influence on this album," Matt Bellamy admits, sat upstairs in the lounge area after our playback. "You know, just brainwashing myself with BBC News, and also realising how much brainwashing is actually coming out of that stuff. There's definitely a feeling of wanting change in England, of how everything's just going old-fashioned. That was all going off in the making of this album. I think in England itself people have woken up to the fact that we don't have a

> "PEOPLE IN ENGLAND HAVE WOKEN UP TO THE FACT WE DON'T HAVE A DEMOCRACY"
> MATT BELLAMY

system is completely out of date and the news media is particularly skewed. Having lived in England for the past five or 10 years has been quite an experience because we feel like we are totally powerless; I've noticed it more so than other countries. The whole banking crisis has been very bad in England, and the whole MP thing, and also that we've been taken into a war that we don't agree with on the coattails of the USA. There's something about being English in the past few years where there's a feeling of, 'Fucking hell, we don't have any control over our lives.'"

And yeah, yeah, he doesn't *currently* live in England. But...

"It comes from a person who feels English at heart, who's not in England and is almost over-brainwashing themselves with news from England, because they feel like they're losing touch with it. At the same time, that gives you an objective view to what's actually going on there."

Does he perhaps feel a duty, as a rock'n'roll star, to reflect all this?

"No. I don't feel a duty, not even compelled. I was just interested in that stuff, and the music reflects who the people making it are. If I was more interested in doing other things and had a completely different lifestyle, I'm sure that would come out in the music. It depends on how you take it. You can take it in a light way if you want to. Like, every time the vocals kick in in 'United States Of Eurasia', it just makes me fucking laugh every time, because it's just

Muse record 'The Resistance' at their studio in Lake Como: Matt's rocks a matching shirt and headphones combo; Dom channels the spirit of Led Zep through his gong; Chris learns how to play slap bass; and the boys settle in together behind the mixing desk to play back their latest masterpiece

so for me that's very funny. And there's other bits, like the glam-rock beat in 'Uprising'. To me there's a light side to the band, which is on there. Of course there's some heavy stuff in there as well, but I like to think that we mix it up enough to not make people come away feeling jaded. I want people to come away feeling excited and driven."

But there definitely seem to be quite a lot of recurring phrases like fear, alienation and that kind of stuff – you mention "*the thought police*". There's that line in 'Undisclosed Desires' where you sing of "*pushing it beyond peaceful protest*"...

"Yeah. That's the edgiest moment regarding resistance – how are we going to make a change? I think I've put forward the idea in the album that love and peaceful protest is ultimately the best way, but you can't help thinking that sometimes it's not enough; there's a fine line, and I'm treading that fine line on this album. You could bury yourself in the idea of your girlfriend or someone you love and just forget about anything else, or you could use it as a method of protesting – in the Gandhi sense that peaceful resistance is the best form of resistance. But then there's the idea that kicking a few shop windows in also helps as well! The album is teetering between all those different versions of resistance."

> "WE DON'T FEEL LIKE WE HAVE ANY BOUNDARIES. WE NEVER HAVE TO PULL BACK"
> DOM HOWARD

Ask the other two members of Muse – Matt, Dom and Chris are all to be interviewed separately today – how they feel about this politicised direction, and they are inclined not to interfere with their singer's vision. "With the lyrics and stuff, me and Dom don't really get involved," says Chris Wolstenholme, tall, affable bass player. "Usually the first time I hear the lyrics is when Matt comes in and says, 'Are you ready to do the backing vocals?' That's sort of the first time I hear the lyrics. But it's not really something me and Dom have ever got involved in 'cos it's quite a personal thing and it's the one thing that I feel like no one else has got the right to comment on. When it comes to guitar parts, bass parts, drum parts then everyone's very open to putting forward ideas as to how we should be playing things, but when it comes to lyrics it's a totally different thing altogether and it's something I've always left Matt to."

Dominic Howard, happy, also affable drummer, agrees: "A lot things that Matt's singing about are things we were generally talking about over the course of the album anyway. But me and Chris never really hear the lyrics. Or really a lot of the singing at all, for that matter. I mean, sometimes we do some loose ideas, but since we started the band like 16 years ago or something, we've never done much in the way of rehearsals with Matt singing. In reality, we only ever hear him sing when we do a show or record a piece of music. So it's all kind of new to the two of us, you know?"

One thing they will all happily enthuse about, at length, is The Music. This being Muse (and Muse without a producer, no less) it was always going to be over the top. But 'The Resistance' is without question even bigger, even more massive and over-the-top than anything they've done previously. "This album reminds me of 'Origin of Symmetry' in a way, because 'Origin...' was where we really let ourselves go without any fear," Matt offers. "I think we've done the same on this album. It's something we needed to do and it was good working without a producer because we thought we'd run into problems. We *did* have a lot of problems, fights and arguments, among the band, but we made decisions really quick; we're more decisive than we were on the last album."

"There's no range when we're in the studio, no range holding us back, particularly not having a producer," continues Dom. "We just

had any boundaries so sometimes when we do something that might be a bit complex, or a bit weird or a bit funny or a bit over the top, it's always made us go, "Ha, ha, ha, that's quite good isn't it? That's quite funny!" But we've never, like, wanted to pull back. There's no reason we should have any restrictions. We don't feel that way, anyway."

"We always like to push things to the limit," concurs Chris, initially at least. "But sometimes when we're in the studio things go so far that we kind of have to pull them back a bit because it is easy to go too far sometimes and just make everything seem like a joke. But then I think it's nice to have things like that every now and again because it makes people realise that we're not deadly serious all the time, 'cause I think there's that misconception with us that everyone thinks we're really serious and sit around talking about politics and the state of the world everyday. And we don't. We're aware of it and it upsets us, but we're not like that as people, and I think hearing the album some of the lyrics are quite serious but bits of it are more tongue-in-cheek. And some of them do make you laugh a bit."

Certainly, there are funny, quite gloriously over-the-top bits. The layered, "*I want to ride my bicycle!*" vocals in the bridge of 'United States Of Eurasia' being something of a peak (Dom: "We thought that was too good to take out, so we left it"). Elsewhere though, musical adventure abounds, particularly on 'Undisclosed Desires'. "That was one of the first songs I've ever done when I don't play anything," says Matt. "I just sing. It's just string samples that have been edited and rhythmically placed with an electronic drum beat and Chris playing bass. So it's a song where we all do the opposite of what we normally do. Dom did electric drums instead of acoustic drums, Chris played the most embarrassing style of playing that you can play, and I just did nothing. It's like the anti-Muse song."

Most astonishing and over-the-top of all, however, is the closing, three-part 'Exogenesis: Symphony', a classical piece that was put together by Matt on his own over the course of many years, but which he now had the time, given Muse's own studio set up, to fully realise.

Chris: "You can always just take the band away from that track and just have the orchestral bit and it would still be beautiful. I just think it's a stunning piece of music and we've never done something like that before, where you've got all these songs that are in different movements. The orchestra were the main bit of the song and the band was

What Was Happening

- Michael Jackson buried
- Kings Of Leon, Arctic Monkeys and Radiohead headline Reading & Leeds
- Wild Beasts 'Two Dancers' released;
- JLS 'Beat Again' Number One

Dom's drum room in all its glory, and (inset) just a few of Matt's many millions of effects pedals

more of a backdrop. The strings were at the forefront. It's fucking astonishing."

Dom: "It's a real journey that song as well. It's kind of... you can't really hear what Matt's singing in the first part so much, but the whole song is about leaving this destructive planet we've created, leaving it behind to go and populate somewhere else in the universe. So it's a big journey anyway, it's a big kind of filmic, visual journey as well."

And will the world's most decorated Best Live Band be attempting to replicate this spectacle in stadiums and arenas?

"Well," says Matt. "We'll give it a go!"

Some more words to describe 'The Resistance': a gigantic leap forward for a band who many must have felt could not make any more gigantic leaps forward, especially given those two Wembley shows that so felt like some kind of pinnacle. An album that moves into musical pastures new, with forays into both R&B and classical, but which retains the strengths of this most uniquely placed of British bands – the very large riffs, the operatic vocals, the willingness, the unrelenting desire to be more and more overblown and outrageous. A stupid record, that will make everyone who hears it – not least, again, its creators – giggle at certain points, but in the way that fun rock records should make you giggle. A political record, albeit one whose targets are, by its creators own admission, unspecific – more about planting seeds of unrest in people's minds than providing any solutions. So, Matthew, in your words: is 'The Resistance' a concept album?

"No, because a concept record implies that you had a pre-planned musical narrative, and it wasn't like that. For me there were pre-planned lyrical anchors that if I was in doubt I could turn to, but it wasn't necessarily a narrative thing."

But you agree that there are themes running through it?

"I think if you had to boil it down to one theme, it would be the idea that there's some sort of romance taking place in this, call it contemporary England, with all the bollocks going on everywhere – you just think to yourself, 'It's a bunch of bollocks, isn't it?!'. So if I was in doubt as to where to go with a certain lyric or song I'd go back to those initial thoughts. Like Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: I read that book when I was younger at school and I only really took in the political side of it, but I read it again about a year ago and the romantic side of the book moved me – this tragic love story, and the idea that love was the only place where there was some freedom from all the bollocks gonig on around everyone. The act of love can be a political act in those kind of scenarios, as the one place where the state can't invade your privacy. That love story touched me much more than the overall political meaning of the book. So I'd say that was one of the cornerstones of the album, really, the love story in that book."

"SOME PEOPLE THINK WE SIT AROUND AND TALK POLITICS ALL DAY. WE DON'T"
CHRIS WOLSTENHOLME

Some final words about Muse, then: hopeful, ambitious, self-aware, funny, lovely, lucky people who adore what they do, maybe stating the bleeding obvious sometimes, but stating it louder and prouder and more powerfully than anyone else is doing at present. And, with their fifth album 'The Resistance', about to get even more massive than they already are doing so.

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2009

The Brave New Direction

THE RESISTANCE

With the prog dials turned way up to 11, Muse's fifth was brimming with global concerns, small-gun defiance, inter-landmass wars and 1984. Our brains!

Greetings, Citizen Of Eurasia, resident of colony GBv6.0. Please state serial code and expiry date to any hovering micromonitor and proceed to Aquadome for daily cleansing. The state reminds all citizens to keep their ResUnits appropriately free of contraband; more pertinently, any citizen harbouring the works of known fugitive gang referred to as Muse will be re-educated. And the state will again reiterate its commitment to the eradication of emotion: in Eurasia, to love is to die.

And that's just it, dear citizen, that's the point of Muse's barmy, overblown, sometimes hilarious, sometimes stunning fifth record. Actually, opus is more apt: by now you'll know about the grand themes of state control, unjust war and marauding Thought Police, maybe you took part in the treasure hunt that stretched from Dubai to New York and you'll certainly know there's something on this record that's 15 minutes long and called 'Exogenesis Symphony'. But beneath the bombast lies Muse's most focused record yet, a treatise on the ineffable power of love.

But it sure takes a while. Muse have always been ambitious, but 'United States Of Eurasia' pushes the envelope clean off this sphere of existence: it's like 'Bohemian Rhapsody' crossed with the anthem of an entire planet, all hoofed up with ultrasteroids, strings and guitars that zoom like spaceships. It's deliriously unhinged and shamelessly grandiose and, most importantly, superb. And as the tsunami flourishes and chorus-line hamming twinkle into an appropriation of a Chopin nocturne the scope changes in an instant to something graceful, tonally redolent of 'Citizen Erased' in parts, and Muse remind us why we loved them so much in the first place: because when they go unapologetically batshit insane they're untouchable. And it's a shame there's not more like it. 'Uprising' and 'Guiding Light', for example, are just myriad ideas and layers thrown at a wall and expected to stick.

Lyrically it's a love-letter from *1984*'s Winston Smith to Julia, or ratheæær Bellamy to his fiancee. "*Love is our resistance*" goes 'Resistance' (surprisingly), and the abiding message is that forbidden romance against the odds will, even in this dystopia, triumph. The controlling state leitmotif gets tired quickly, what with all the bollocks about Thought Police and such, but the references to "*my guiding lightning bolt*" suggest that behind the musical lunacy is just a guy in love with a beautiful woman. Perhaps because this is the first time he's consistently opened himself up emotionally Bellamy felt the need to cloak his feelings in metaphor, and thus 'The Resistance' feels human throughout.

Chris's bass doodles in 'Resistance' and the barrage of Dom Howard's drums in 'Guiding Light' add texture to otherwise garishly bright canvases, even though the latter feels like Muse on autopilot save an atomic solo ripped straight from the Van Halen school of subtlety. 'MK Ultra', too, could be any B-side from the last couple of albums. 'Unnatural Selection', on the other hand, is another that makes no bones about its craziness and is all the stronger for it; heralded by a massive organ and guided by a frenetic Bellamy riff and a devil-may-care attitude to pace, it's boiling and brilliant. But such supernovae of genius are all too rare, as much of 'The Resistance' is predictable in its insanity. Maybe they've painted themselves into a corner – now we expect billion-piece string sections and falsetto rock lord histrionics and backing vocals performed by a holy choir of visiting angels and acrobatic guitars and obelisk drums and and and and – so the schlock of the new has been lost. So when, on 'Undisclosed Desires' and the terrible 'I Belong To You', they try to reignite the low-down R&B of 'Supermassive Back Hole', it backfires. The former is like something Timbaland might find down the back of his mixing desk (perhaps a compliment six years ago) and the latter is a romp through sleazy bass and an ill-advised section where Bellamy sings in French. And then, when it can't get any more laughable: *clarinet solo*. It's times like this that 'The Resistance' isn't much of an album, more a prayer to the dormant lysergic prog gods plodding around Rick Wakeman's subconscious after a night playing wizard.

Speaking of which, it's about time to talk about 'Exogenesis Symphony'. Comprising 'Overture', 'Cross Pollination' and 'Redemption', slapped at the end it feels like a concession rather than dramatic centrepiece. Having rattled around Bellamy's mind for years and dealing with nothing so weighty as, y'know, life on Earth having its roots in the stars and humans taking an exodus from the planet to repopulate another world (*ob*viously), it's almost unbearably pretentious. Yet for all the bluster it's far too reliant on Bellamy's string arrangements (an astonishing achievement, yes, but he's not quite as accomplished as on the ivories and fretboard; the next album will be a killer) rather than the symphonic peaks the trio themselves are capable of creating.

It's symptomatic of 'The Resistance' as a whole: conceptually very impressive but musically all too familiar. And while not their best, it's decent enough to ensure there'll be a sixth album, even though the truly off-the-wall moments are either rare or misguided, meaning the record feels slightly anonymous. So next time, guys, can you just go nuts? **Ben Patashnik**

The Details

Uprising ★★★★
Resistance ★★★★
Undisclosed Desires ★★★
United States Of Eurasia (+ Collateral Damage) ★★★★
Guiding Light ★★★
Unnatural Selection ★★★
MK Ultra ★★★
I Belong To You (+Mon Dur s'ouvre à ta voix) ★★
Exogenesis: Symphony Part 1 (Overture) ★★★
Exogenesis: Symphony Part 2 (Cross-Pollination) ★★★
Exogenesis: Symphony Part 3 (Redemption) ★★★

Released: Sept 15, 2009
Recorded: Studio Bellini, Lake Como, Italy
Producer: Muse
Chart Position: 1
Singles: Uprising, Undisclosed Desires, Resistance

DEAN CHALKLEY

TOWERING ABOVE

SECC, GLASGOW

MONDAY NOVEMBER 9

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NOVEMBER 21
2009

The lads take the rock'n'roll penis extension to its wildest extreme, building their own individual tower blocks for the utilitarian dystopia of the Resistance tour...

Twenty years ago – to the day, as it happens – the Berlin Wall was torn down and thousands of East Germans who had never eaten a Big Mac, watched an episode of *Baywatch* or bought a Michael Jackson album came streaming over into the free-market neoliberal promised land to the sound of David Hasselhoff warbling his way through 'Looking For Freedom'.

If only Matt Bellamy had been there to warn them. Muse's impish frontman has spent much of his career giving voice to our pre-apocalyptic fears and railing against our hidden reptilian overlords – the omniscient, elemental they, the Bilderberg and COINTELPRO puppet-masters who (variously) want to bury it, smother it and murder it, "laugh while they watch us fail," and "won't stop breaking us down." Each new album is his exquisitely-realised sandwich board, each subsequent tour a staging post on the road to revolution. Think about that, man, think about that.

Or, y'know, don't. The beauty of Muse is that they work perfectly well – better, even – as an overblown, retina-searing rock spectacle helmed by a mad little wizard in tight red trousers, bombarding you with light and sound.

So when the curtain drops tonight to reveal the band astride 30-foot high glowing rectangular pedestals, easing their way into the Goldfrapp-y groove of 'Uprising', it's odd to find it all so underwhelming. 'The Resistance' is a patchier record than its predecessors, and this song – and the title track that follows it – sounds a bit like a band operating well within their comfort zone, even if that comfort zone is somewhere in the upper ionosphere. They sound, in short, like Muse 'doing a Muse'. And Jesus, does Chris Wolstenholme look bored.

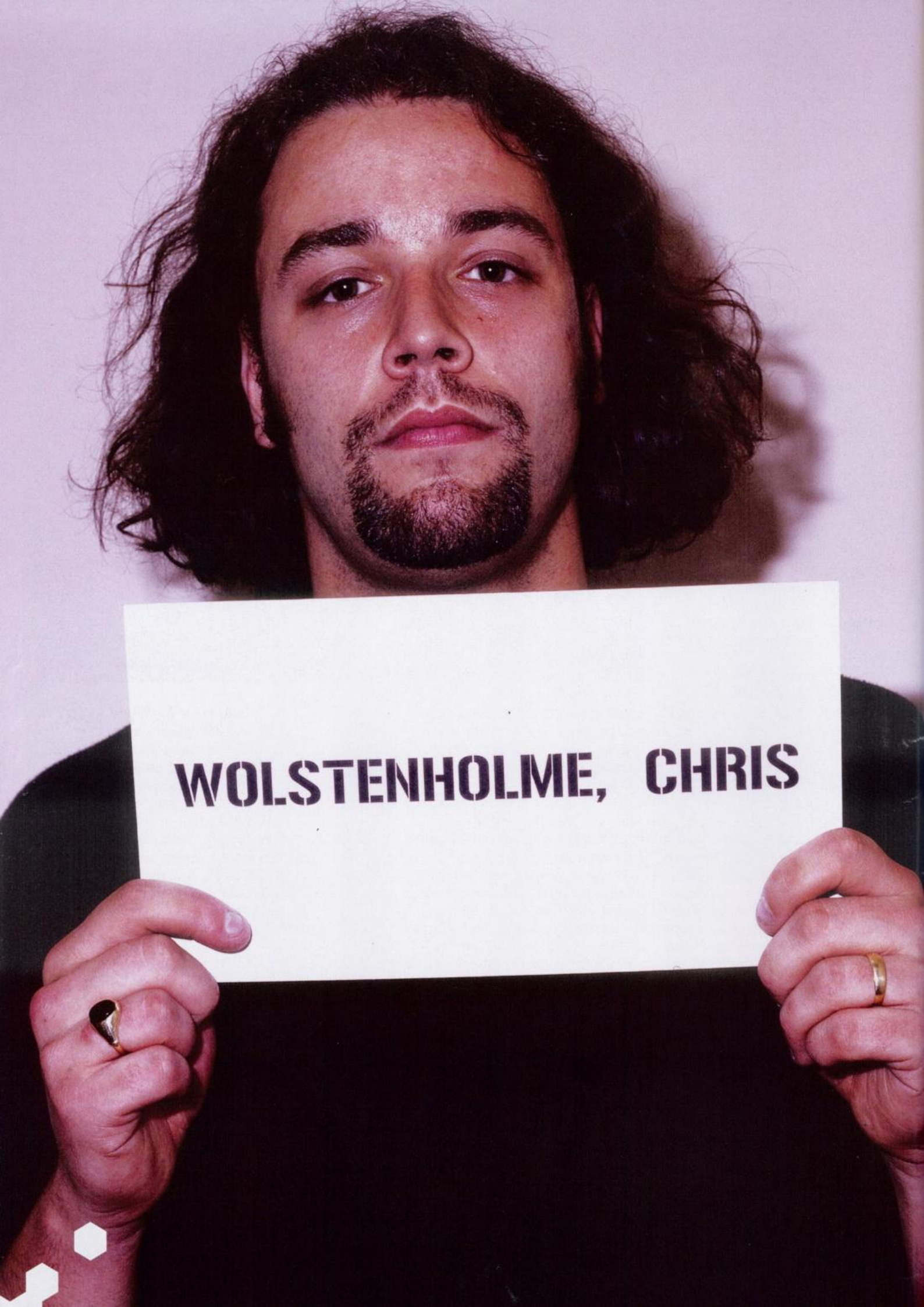
In fact, the show doesn't really feel like it's started until the pedestals descend and Bellamy comes swaggering forward, wrestling the riff to 'Newborn' out of his guitar while lasers dance madly around him. From there it's into 'Map Of The Problematique' and – via a few wigged-out bars of Led Zep's 'Heartbreaker' – 'Supermassive Black Hole', its syncopated robotic rhythm underpinning what is undoubtedly one of the best singles – by any band – of the last decade.

Muse being Muse, you don't get simple, straight-up recreations of the record; not when you can hyper-distort your guitar into frequencies that'll make a dog prolapse at the press of a Kaoss Pad. That's to be admired; proggy bagpipe jams of the sort they engage in after 'Feeling Good', perhaps less so. But there's no arguing with the likes of the indecently pretty 'Starlight', whose tinkling piano line is the cue for the mass swaying of limbs and heartfelt "*Hooooooold you in my arms*", or 'Plug In Baby', at the climax of which giant confetti-filled balloons are launched into the crowd while Bellamy wields his guitar like an out-of-control fire hose that might hoist him into the air at any second.

And if the shapeless murk of 'Unnatural Selection' seems an odd song to end on, that's because they're obviously not done yet; 'Stockholm Syndrome' is five minutes of quivering, falsetto-led euphoria, and a gallant, climactic charge through 'Knights Of Cydonia' – the band at their batshit best, mixing B-movie sci-fi, obscure '60s rock 'n' roll records, and utter sonic mayhem overwhelm to devastating effect – eventually brings things to a suitably bombastic close.

"We love you Glasgow," gushes drummer Dom Howard as the band leave the stage. "We'll see you next time," he promises.

We can roughly guesstimate a brand new Muse album to be arriving in 2012, the supposed year of the Mayan apocalypse. We'll leave it to you to imagine the possibilities. **Barry Nicolson**


WOLSTENHOLME, CHRIS

MEET
Chris Wolstenholme

Amongst other things, the man responible for Muse's gargantuan basslines would like to know why he keeps getting shoes thrown onstage

What do you have in your pockets right now?
"Some passes and the number for National Rail Enquiries."

If you could be a reincarnation of any dead rock star who would it be and who would you punch or kill?
"Keith Moon or Dennis Wilson, because they were sort of the same person."

What's your personal muse?
"Watching my boy grow."

What are each band member's worst habits?
"Dom's always last. In any situation or anything, Dom's always the last person to arrive or come out of a building."

What is the cheapest/most expensive/weirdest present you've ever received form a fan?
"I keep getting shoes thrown onstage at every gig. I don't know what that's about."

What are your earliest memories of Muse?
"I met Matt and Dom quite a few years before the band started because we went to school together – they were at school ahead of me, but I knew them from seeing them around town. Then a load of bands popped up out of nowhere where we lived – all of a sudden everybody wanted to play the guitar and be in a rock band. I was in a band, Matt and Dom were in another band, but theirs was on the edge of self-destruction and mine was falling apart too, so we got together from there. March 1994 was the first time we did a gig as Muse. It was a weird one really, at a roller disco. It had the disco area at one end of the hall and this little stage in the corner. We thought we were going to do a gig with people watching us but we weren't – we were in the corner playing and there were all these 10-year-old kids skating round in circles oblivious to the fact there was a band on!"

When did you notice Muse mania taking off?
"I think the first two gigs or so we did in France, a gig we did in St Merlot which was a festival, we had no idea what to expect. In Devon we were doing bigger gigs, but we got put on this festival in France, we'd never been there before, and we ended up playing to 10,000 people. The impact of that was massive. We came back with a new confidence."

How did you feel about headlining Glastonbury for the first time in 2004?
"Everyone was looking at us like underdogs before that. We were terrified; we didn't think we were big enough to be doing it either. Headlining Glastonbury, you can't say no. Then on the day we realised what we were actually doing. We turned up at four o'clock in the afternoon – it was terrible, it was raining. I think James Brown was playing – It was one of the most loaded looking crowds. Morrissey went on and got arsey with the crowd, and that didn't go down too well. He was just being a bit of a cock. We were like, 'this is gonna be awful' – Morrissey's a huge name and James Brown's a huge name, and people have said to us, 'what are they doing headlining?' And we came off and we'd played the best gig of our lives and the crow was immense. It felt so strange, we'd been all over the world and we'd played the best show of our lives back in Somerset. I think a lot of people's perceptions of us changed."

"OUR FIRST GIG AT WAS AT A ROLLER DISCO. ALL THESE KIDS SKATING AROUND US"

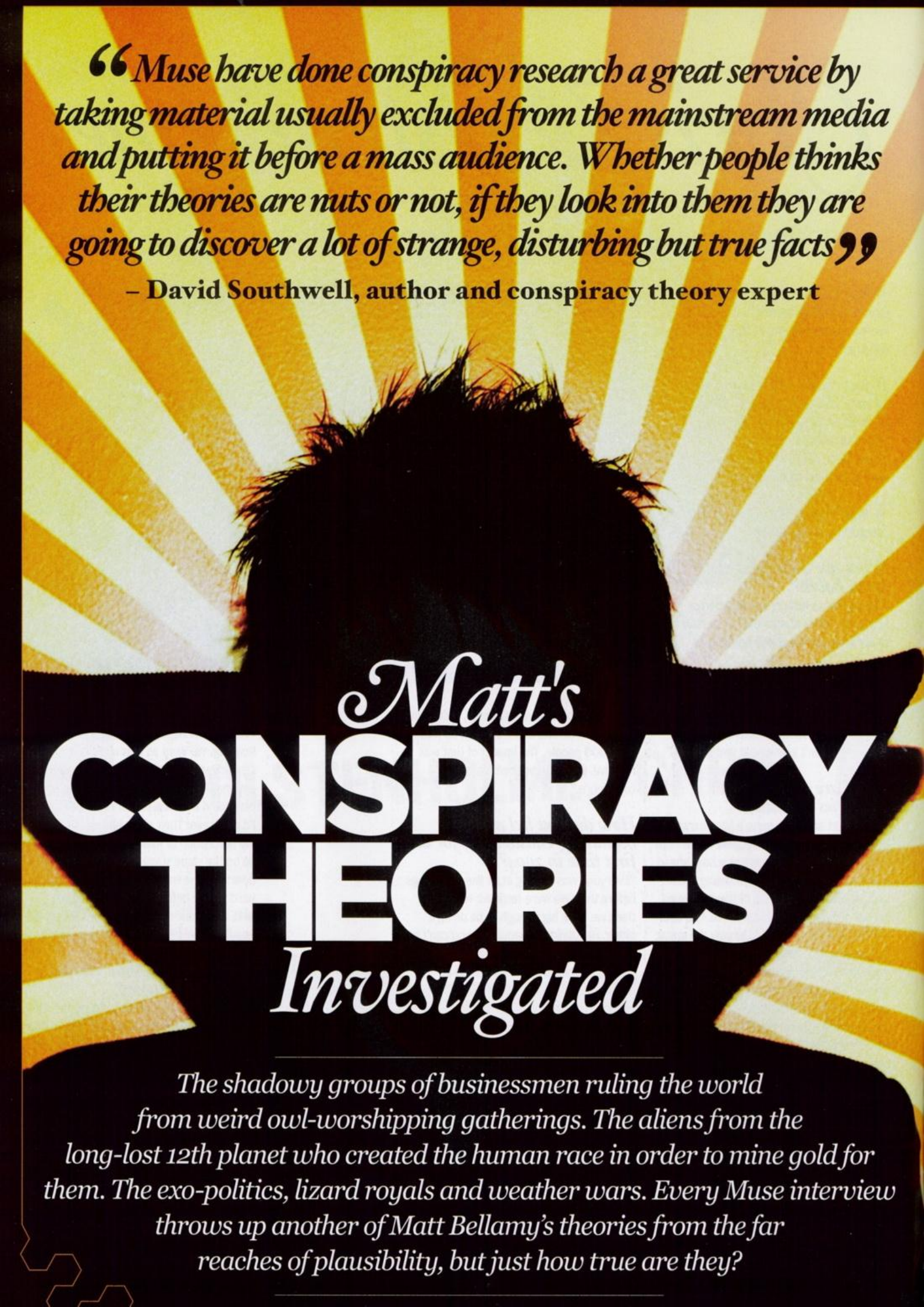
What's your highlight so far?
"The biggest highlight was headlining Reading. We went as kids all the time, and I think it was exactly ten years ago to the day that I saw Rage Against The Machine play – and that was one of the best gigs I'd ever seen! Their show has embodied my perception of Reading ever since, so to be on the same stage headlining ten years down the line was a pretty good feeling. We'd played before; being first on the NME tent – out of all the festivals in Europe, Reading's the best crowd you're gonna get."

What's been your scariest moment ever?
"I almost took a bottle in the face. We did this festival in the middle of the desert in Tucson and it was fucking nuts, security beating the shit out of people, it was crazy. From the start there were shoes and bottles and shit in the air permanently, it was this chaotic area of shit flying everywhere. Some guy in the front got the fucking shit kicked out of him, they pulled him out and we had to stop the show. It just looked like a row of bikers at the front. This guy's face was busted up and all bloody. He was being a bit loose in the crowd, and security decided rather than gently removing him it was like a machine of fists. It wasn't nice."

SAM SCOTT-HUNTER/ANDY WILLSHER

"Muse have done conspiracy research a great service by taking material usually excluded from the mainstream media and putting it before a mass audience. Whether people thinks their theories are nuts or not, if they look into them they are going to discover a lot of strange, disturbing but true facts"

– David Southwell, author and conspiracy theory expert



Matt's CONSPIRACY THEORIES *Investigated*

The shadowy groups of businessmen ruling the world from weird owl-worshipping gatherings. The aliens from the long-lost 12th planet who created the human race in order to mine gold for them. The exo-politics, lizard royals and weather wars. Every Muse interview throws up another of Matt Bellamy's theories from the far reaches of plausibility, but just how true are they?

HAARP *The Alaskan HAARP installation was the inspiration behind the stage set of the 'Black Holes And Revelations' tour and the title of the accompanying live DVD. Matt's of the belief it has a sinister secret purpose.*

MATT: "The government are saying it's for communications with submarines and their own spacecraft, but scientists have said that they're really trying to tap into the ionosphere where a lot of the weather stuff takes place. Interfere with that and you can manipulate the weather. There's a huge battle going on as to who'll control the weather."

David Southwell: "HAARP is real and you can find proof that the US have been looking into weather manipulation as a weapon since 1973. Matt's theory fits a lot of the facts and is more credible than those who believe all global warming is a weather weapon."

CREDIBILITY RATING 8/10

CYDONIA *Cydonia is an area of Mars which some scientists believe to have once been a coastal region, suggesting there was once water on the planet. There are also hills in the region which have appeared to resemble pyramids and humanoid faces in some pictures.*

Matt: "There are people out there now who are realising the whole pyramid area in North Africa, not just the Giza area, is one enormous, very in-depth star map if you look at it from above. They're trying to lay out some kind of message to someone who's in the sky. The same layout has been found on Mars, on Cydonia."

DS: "Matt is right about Giza and other ancient sites mapping the heavens, but it is just as likely they were intended to record where it was believed the soul returned to in the stars after death. They are not the best evidence for direct alien communication and there is no proven link to Mars."

CREDIBILITY RATING 4/10

EXOGENESIS *Exogenesis, or panspermia, is the theory that life on Earth evolved from 'seeds' of alien life which landed here from space. Matt was so taken with the concept he wrote an entire bloody symphony about it.*

MATT: "I don't think there are aliens with us now, but I certainly think part of our DNA at least is not from this Earth."

DS: "Exogenesis is an idea that goes all the way back the 5th Century BC and has a lot of top scientific backing. Matt's talking less about conspiracy and more about the fringes of accepted science. There is a 50/50 chance he and some of the world's best brains are spot on."

CREDIBILITY RATING 7/10

9/11 *Matt has long been of the opinion that the 9/11 attacks were something of an inside job.*

MATT: "There's never been any hard evidence that ties any of the usual suspects with this. In fact, the evidence they did use [to incriminate the alleged terrorists] was laughable. The plane's black box that keeps all of the information, that melted. But apparently a passport with one of the hijacker's names flew out of the window and landed on the ground. That's laughable. I'm not saying that it wasn't an attack on the United States – it was, there's no question about that. The question is who was the attack done by and for what reason? I think there's far more to suggest that a select amount of people who are reaping vast profits from the war that's taking place at the moment... they've got the means and certainly the motive to try to pull something like that off. We've got to be careful we don't let these people make mugs of us. There was never an independent investigation into what took place yet we've waged two wars in its name."

DS: "There are other suspects than the US Government when it comes to 9/11, though they and the military have exploited it to justify illegal wars."

CREDIBILITY RATING 5/10

DEAN CHALKLEY

Know your BELLAMY?

Fancy bagging yourself a signed copy of Muse's latest masterpeice? Read on

WIN SIGNED ALBUMS!

So, having read the entire NME Muse special, you think you know everything there is to know about the band, right? Well yes, you probably do, but are you a superfan who's also scoured every website, blog and even – ahem! – our esteemed editor's biography, *Out Of This World: The Story Of Muse* for details? Well we like to reward such avid devotion, so answer these questions and we'll enter you into a draw to win a signed copy of 'The Resistance'! Email your answers to: *info@nme.com* Best of luck!

Question 1:

Where did Muse play their cover of 'Feeling Good' in public for the first time?

Question 2:

What was the name of the band Dom was playing in when he met Matt, and convinced the band to let him join?

Question 3:

How were Matt's guitars delivered to him onstage at Wembley?

Question 4:

Where was Matt Bellamy born?

Question 5:

How much did Kelly Jones reportedly claim that Muse had demanded to support them at their Day At The Races gig in 2001?

Question 6:

Which venue did Muse play the day before the September 11 attacks?

Question 7:

Which Muse track had the working title 'The Church Of The Sub-Genius'?

Question 8:

When Maverick refused to release 'Origin Of Symmetry' in America, which US rocker tried to license the album for release on his own label?

Question 9:

Which two major US rock acts did Muse support on an American tour in the spring of 2000?

Question 10:

On the 'Curiosa' tour of America in 2004 Chris broke his wrist playing five-a-side football. Which band were Muse playing against?

EDITORIAL

Editor Mark Beaumont **Production Editor** Hamish MacBain **Picture Editor** Zoe Capstick **Art Editor** Michael Chapman **Words** Mark Beaumont, Dan Martin, Piers Martin Stephen Dalton, Steven Wells, James Oldham, Roger Morton, Victoria Segal, James Jam, Anthony Thornton, Barry Nicolson, Hamish MacBain, Ben Patashnik, **Photographers** Dean Chalkley, Ed Miles, Martin Philbey, Hamish Brown, James Looker, D Tonge, Sam Scott-Hunter, Eva Vermandel, Roger Sargent, Kevin Westenberg, Tom Sheenhan, Antonio Petronzio, Colin Lane, Jo McCaughey, Danny North, Kevin Westenberg, Andy Willsher **Thanks** Marc McLaren, Sarah Tamlyn **Cover photo** Martin Philbey **NME Editor** Krissi Murison **Publisher** Faith Hill **Marketing** Tim Pearson, Tom Dobbs **Group Production Manager** Becky Goode **Display sales** Neil McSteen **Publishing Director** Paul Cheal

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